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LITERARY STUDIES

(MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS)

WITH ADDITIONS

BY

WALTER BAGEHOT
M.A. AND FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

EDITED, WITH A PREFATORY MEMOIR, BY THE LATE
RICHARD HOLT HUTTON

IN THREE VOLUMES
VOL. III.

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA
1907
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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Issued in "Silver Library," *July*, 1895; reprinted, *June*, 1898; *November*, 1902; Re-Issue, with Additions, *June*, 1906; reprinted, *February*, 1907.

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THE last three papers in this volume were not given in the late Mr. Hutton's edition, and as it is considered by Mr. Bagehot's friends that they ought obviously to be included, they are now added to this edition.

E. BAGEHOT.

1906.

CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

ESSAY		PAGE
I.	LETTERS ON THE COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1851 (*The Inquirer*, 1852)	1
II.	CÆSARISM AS IT EXISTED IN 1865 (*The Economist*, 4th March, 1865)	72
III.	OXFORD (*Prospective Review*, August, 1852)	80
IV.	BISHOP BUTLER (*Prospective Review*, October, 1854)	103
V.	THE IGNORANCE OF MAN (*National Review*, April, 1862)	160
VI.	ON THE EMOTION OF CONVICTION (*Contemporary Review*, April, 1871)	190
VII.	THE METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF TOLERATION (*Contemporary Review*, April, 1874)	204
VIII.	THE PUBLIC WORSHIP REGULATION BILL (*Economist*, 18th July, 1875)	226
IX.	HENRY CRABB ROBINSON (*Fortnightly Review*, August, 1869)	235
X.	BAD LAWYERS OR GOOD? (*Fortnightly Review*, June, 1870)	251
XI.	THE CRÉDIT MOBILIER AND BANKING COMPANIES IN FRANCE (*National Review*, January, 1857)	280
XII.	MEMOIR OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES WILSON (*Supplement to The Economist*, 17th November, 1860)	304
XIII.	THE CHANCES OF A LONG CONSERVATIVE RÉGIME IN ENGLAND (*Fortnightly Review*, 1878)	358
XIV.	BOSCASTLE (*Spectator*, 1866)	379
XV.	MR. GROTE (*Spectator*, 1871)	386

LITERARY STUDIES.

LETTERS ON THE FRENCH COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1851.

(*Addressed to the Editor of* "THE INQUIRER".)

LETTER I.

THE DICTATORSHIP.

PARIS, *8th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—You have asked me to tell you what I think of French affairs. I shall be pleased to do so; but I ought perhaps to begin by cautioning you against believing, or too much heeding, what I say. However, I do not imagine that I need do so; for with your experience of the public journals, you will be quite aware that it is not difficult to be an "occasional correspondent". Have your boots polished in a blacking-shop, and call the interesting officiator an "intelligent *ouvrier*"; be shaved, and cite the *coiffeur* as "a person in rather a superior station"; call your best acquaintance "a well-informed person," and all others "persons whom I have found to be occasionally not in error," and—abroad, at least—you will soon have matter for a newspaper letter. I should quite deceive you if I professed to have made these profound researches; nor, like

Sir Francis Head, "do I no longer know where I am," because the French President has asked me to accompany him in his ride. My perception of personal locality has not as yet been so tried. I only know what a person who is in a foreign country during an important political catastrophe cannot avoid knowing, what he runs against, what is beaten into him, what he can hardly help hearing, seeing, and reflecting.

That Louis Napoleon has gone to Notre-Dame to return thanks to God for the seven millions and odd suffrages of the French people—that he has taken up his abode at the Tuileries, and that he has had new napoleons coined in his name—that he has broken up the trees of liberty for firewood—that he has erased, or is erasing (for they are many), *Liberté, Egalité,* and *Fraternité,* from the National buildings,—all these things are so easy and so un-English, that I am pretty sure, with you, they will be thought signs of pompous impotence, and I suppose many people will be inclined to believe the best comment to be the one which I heard—"*Mon Dieu, il a sauvé la France: la rue du Coq s'appelle maintenant la rue de l'Aigle!*" [1]

I am inclined, however, to imagine that this idea would be utterly erroneous; that, on the contrary, the President is just now, at least, really strong and really popular; that the act of 2nd December did succeed and is succeeding; that many, that most, of the inferior people do really and sincerely pray *Domine Salvum fac Napoleonem.*

In what I have seen of the comments of the English press upon recent events here, two things are not quite enough kept apart—I mean the temporary dictatorship of

[1] The general reader may not before have read, that the Rue du Coq l'Honoré is an old and well-known street in Paris, and that notwithstanding the substitution of the eagle for cock as a military emblem, there is no thought of changing its name.

Louis Napoleon to meet and cope with the expected crisis of '52, and the continuance of that dictatorship hereafter,—the new, or as it is called, the *Bas*-Empire—in a word, the coming Constitution and questionable political machinery with which "the nephew of my uncle" is now proposing to endow France. Of course, in reality these two things *are* separate. It is one thing to hold that a military rule is required to meet an urgent and temporary difficulty: another, to advocate the continuance of such a system, when so critical a necessity no longer exists.

It seems to me, or would seem, if I did not know that I was contradicted both by much English writing and opinion, and also by many most competent judges here, that the first point, the temporary dictatorship, is a tolerably clear case; that it is not to be complicated with the perplexing inquiry what form of government will permanently suit the French people;—that the President was, under the actual facts of the case, quite justified in assuming the responsibility, though of course I allow that responsibility to be tremendous. My reasons for so believing I shall in this letter endeavour to explain, except that I shall not, I fancy, have room to say much on the moral defensibility or indefensibility of the *coup d'état;* nor do I imagine that you want from me any ethical speculation—that is manufactured in Printing-house Square; but I shall give the best account I can of the matter-of-fact consequences and antecedents of the New Revolution, of which, in some sense, a resident in France may feel without presumption that he knows something hardly so well known to those at home.

The political justification of Louis Napoleon is, as I apprehend, to be found in the state of the public mind which immediately preceded the *coup d'état.* It is very rarely that a country expects a revolution at a given time; indeed, it is perhaps not common for ordinary persons in any country

to anticipate a revolution at all; though profound people may speculate, the mass will ever expect to-morrow to be as this day at least, if not more abundant. But once name the day, and all this is quite altered. As a general rule the very people who would be most likely to neglect general anticipation are exactly those most likely to exaggerate the proximate consequences of a certain impending event. At any rate, in France five weeks ago, the tradespeople talked of May, '52, as if it were the end of the world. Civilisation and Socialism might probably endure, but buying and selling would surely come to an end; in fact, they anticipated a worse era than February, '48, when trade was at a standstill so long that it has hardly yet recovered, and when the Government stocks fell 40 per cent. It is hardly to be imagined upon what petty details the dread of political dissolution at a fixed and not distant time will condescend to intrude itself. I was present when a huge *Flamande*, in appearance so intrepid that I respectfully pitied her husband, came to ask the character of a *bonne*. I was amazed to hear her say, "I hope the girl is strong, for when the revolution comes next May, and I have to turn off my helper, she will have enough to do". It seemed to me that a political apprehension must be pretty general, when it affected that most non-speculative of speculations, the *reckoning* of a housewife. With this feeling, everybody saved their money: who would spend in luxuries that which might so soon be necessary and invaluable! This economy made commerce—especially the peculiarly Parisian trade, which is almost wholly in articles that *can* be spared—worse and worse; the more depressed trade became, the more the traders feared, and the more they feared, the worse all trade inevitably grew.

I apprehend that this feeling extended very generally among all the classes who do not find or make a livelihood

by literature or by politics. Among the clever people, who understood the subject, very likely the expectation was extremely different; but among the stupid ones who mind their business, and have a business to mind, there was a universal and excessive tremor. The only notion of '52 was "*on se battra dans la rue*". Their dread was especially of Socialism; they expected that the followers of M. Proudhon, who advisedly and expressly maintains "anarchy" to be the best form of Government, would attempt to carry out their theories in action, and that the division between the Legislative and Executive power would so cripple the party of order as to make their means of resistance for the moment feeble and difficult to use. The more sensible did not, I own, expect the annihilation of mankind: civilisation dies hard; the organised sense in all countries is strong; but they expected vaguely and crudely that the party which in '93 ruled for many months, and which in June '48 fought so fanatically against the infant republic, would certainly make a desperate attack,—*might* for some time obtain the upper hand. Of course, it is now matter of mere argument whether the danger was real or unreal, and it is in some quarters rather the fashion to quiz the past fear, and to deny that any Socialists anywhere exist. In spite of the literary exertions of Proudhon and Louis Blanc, in spite of the prison quarrels of Blanqui and Barbès—there are certainly found people who question whether anybody buys the books of the two former, or cares for the incarcerated dissensions of the two latter. But however this may be, it is certain that two days after the *coup d'état* a mass of persons thought it worth while to erect some dozen barricades, and among these, and superintending and directing their every movement, there certainly were, for I saw them myself, men whose physiognomy and accoutrements exactly resembled the traditional Montagnard, sallow, stern, compressed, with

much marked features, which expressed but resisted suffering, and brooding one-ideaed thought, men who from their youth upward had for ever imagined, like Jonah, that they did well—immensely well—to be angry, men armed to the teeth, and ready, like the soldiers of the first Republic, to use their arms savagely and well in defence of theories broached by a Robespierre, a Blanqui, or a Barbès, gloomy fanatics, *over*-principled ruffians. I may perhaps be mistaken in reading in their features the characters of such men, but I know that when one of them disturbed my superintendence of barricade-making with a stern *allez vous-en*, it was not too slowly that I departed, for I *felt* that he would rather shoot me than not. Having seen these people, I conceive that they exist. But supposing that they were all simply fabulous, it would not less be certain that they were *believed* to be, and to be active; nor would it impair the fact that the quiet classes awaited their onslaught in morbid apprehension, with miserable and craven, and I fear we ought to say, *commercial* disquietude.

You will not be misled by any high-flown speculations about liberty or equality. You will, I imagine, concede to me that the first duty of a Government is to ensure the security of that industry which is the condition of social life and civilised cultivation; that especially in so excitable a country as France it is necessary that the dangerous classes should be saved from the strong temptation of long idleness; and that no danger could be more formidable than six months' beggary among the revolutionary *ouvriers*, immediately preceding the exact period fixed by European as well as French opinion for an apprehended convulsion. It is from this state of things, whether by fair means or foul, that Louis Napoleon has delivered France. The effect was magical. Like people who have nearly died because it was prophesied they would die at a specified time, and instantly

recovered when they found or thought that the time was gone and past, so France, timorously anticipating the fated revolution, in a moment revived when she found or fancied that it was come and over. Commerce instantly improved; New Year's Day, when all the Boulevards are one continued fair, has not (as I am told) been for some years so gay and splendid; people began to buy, and consequently to sell; for though it is quite possible, or even probable, that new misfortunes and convulsions may be in store for the French people, yet no one can say when they will be, and to wait till revolutions be exhausted is but the best Parisian for our old acquaintance *Rusticus expectat*. Clever people may now prove that the dreaded peril was a simple chimera, but they can't deny that the fear of it was very real and painful, nor can they dispute that in a week after the *coup d'état* it had at once, and apparently for ever, passed away.

I fear it must be said that no legal or constitutional act could have given an equal confidence. What was wanted was the assurance of an audacious Government, which would stop at nothing, scruple at nothing, to secure its own power and the tranquillity of the country. That assurance all now have; a man who will in this manner dare to dissolve an assembly constitutionally his superiors, then prevent their meeting by armed force; so well and so sternly repress the first beginning of an outbreak, with so little misgiving assume and exercise sole power,—may have enormous other defects, but is certainly a bold ruler—most probably an unscrupulous one—little likely to flinch from any inferior trial.

Of Louis Napoleon, whose personal qualities are, for the moment, so important, I cannot now speak at length. But I may say that, with whatever other deficiencies he may have, he has one excellent advantage over other French statesmen—he has never been a professor, nor a journalist,

nor a promising barrister, nor, by taste, a *littérateur*. He has not confused himself with history; he does not think in leading articles, in long speeches, or in agreeable essays. But he is capable of observing facts rightly, of reflecting on them simply, and acting on them discreetly. And his motto is Danton's, *De l'audace et toujours de l'audace*, and this you know, according to Bacon, in time of revolution, will carry a man far, perhaps even to ultimate victory, and that ever-future millennium, "*la consolidation de la France*".

But on these distant questions I must not touch. I have endeavoured to show you what was the crisis, how strong the remedy, and what the need of a dictatorship. I hope to have convinced you that the first was imminent, the second effectual, and the last expedient.

I remain yours,

AMICUS.

LETTER II.

THE MORALITY OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT.

PARIS, 15*th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—I know quite well what will be said about, or in answer to, my last letter. It will be alleged that I think everything in France is to be postponed to the Parisian commerce — that a Constitution, Equality, Liberty, a Representative Government, are all to be set aside if they interfere even for a moment with the sale of *étrennes* or the manufacture of gimcracks.

I, as you know, hold no such opinions: it would not be necessary for me to undeceive you, who would, I rather hope, never suspect me of *that* sort of folly. But as St. Athanasius aptly observes, "for the sake of the women

who may be led astray, I will this very instant explain my sentiments".

Contrary to Sheridan's rule, I commence by a concession. I certainly admit, indeed I would, upon occasion, maintain, *bonbons* and bracelets to be things less important than common law and Constitutional action. A *coup d'état* would, I may allow, be mischievously supererogatory if it only promoted the enjoyment of what a lady in the highest circles is said to call "bigotry and virtue". But the real question is not to be so disposed of. The Parisian trade, the jewellery, the baubles, the silks, the luxuries, which the Exhibition showed us to be the characteristic industry of France, are very dust in the balance if weighed against the hands and arms which their manufacture employs—the industrial habits which their regular sale rewards—the hunger and idle weariness which the certain demand for them prevents. For this is the odd peculiarity of commercial civilisation. The life, the welfare, the existence of thousands depend on their being paid for doing what seems nothing when done. That gorgeous dandies should wear gorgeous studs—that pretty girls should be prettily dressed—that pleasant drawing-rooms should be pleasantly attired—may seem, to people of our age, sad trifling. But grave as we are, we must become graver still when we reflect on the horrid suffering which the sudden cessation of large luxurious consumption would certainly create, if we imagine such a city as Lyons to be, without warning, turned out of work, and the population feelingly told "to cry in the streets when no man regardeth".

The first duty of society is the preservation of society. By the sound work of old-fashioned generations—by the singular painstaking of the slumberers in churchyards—by dull care—by stupid industry, a certain social fabric somehow exists; people contrive to go out to their work, and to

find work to employ them actually until the evening, body and soul are kept together, and this is what mankind have to show for their six thousand years of toil and trouble.

To keep up this system we must sacrifice everything. Parliaments, liberty, leading articles, essays, eloquence,—all are good, but they are secondary; at all hazards, and if we can, mankind must be kept alive. And observe, as time goes on, this fabric becomes a tenderer and a tenderer thing. Civilisation can't bivouac; dangers, hardships, sufferings, lightly borne by the coarse muscle of earlier times, are soon fatal to noble and cultivated organisation. Women in early ages are masculine, and, as a return match, the men of late years are becoming women. The strong apprehension of a Napoleonic invasion has, perhaps, just now caused more substantial misery in England than once the wars of the Roses.

To apply this "screed of doctrine" to the condition of France. I do not at all say that, but for the late *coup d'état*, French civilisation would certainly have soon come to a final end. *Some* people might have continued to take their meals. Even Socialism would hardly abolish *eau sucrée*. But I do assert that, according to the common belief of the common people, their common comforts were in considerable danger. The debasing torture of acute apprehension was eating into the crude pleasure of stupid lives. No man liked to take a long bill; no one could imagine to himself what was coming. Fear was paralysing life and labour, and as I said at length, in my last, fear, so intense, whether at first reasonable or unreasonable, will, ere long, invincibly justify itself. May, 1852, would, in all likelihood, have been an evil and bloody time, if it had been preceded by six months' famine among the starvable classes.

At present all is changed. Six weeks ago society was living from hand to mouth: now she feels sure of her next

meal. And this, in a dozen words, is the real case—the political excuse for Prince Louis Napoleon. You ask me, or I should not do so, to say a word or two on the moral question and the oath. You are aware how limited my means of doing so are. I have forgotten Paley, and have never read the Casuists. But it certainly does not seem to me proved or clear, that a man who has sworn, even in the most solemn manner, to see another drown, is therefore quite bound, or even at liberty, to stand placidly on the bank. What ethical philosopher has demonstrated this? Coleridge said it was difficult to advance a new error in morals,—yet this, I think, would be one; and the keeping of oaths is peculiarly a point of mere science, for Christianity, in terms at least, only forbids them all. And supposing I am right, such certainly was the exact position of Louis Napoleon. He saw society, I will not say dying or perishing —for I hate unnecessarily to overstate my point—in danger of incurring extreme and perhaps lasting calamities, likely not only to impair the happiness, but moreover to debase the character of the French nation, and these calamities he could prevent. Now who has shown that ethics require of him to have held his hand?

The severity with which the riot was put down on the first Thursday in December has, I observe, produced an extreme effect in England; and with our happy exemption from martial bloodshed, it must, of course, do so. But better one *émeute* now than many in May, be it ever remembered. There are things more demoralising than death, and among these is the sickly-apprehensive suffering for long months of an entire people.

Of course you understand that I am not holding up Louis Napoleon as a complete standard either of ethical scrupulosity or disinterested devotedness; veracity has never been the family failing—for the great Emperor was a still greater

liar. And Prince Louis has been long playing what, morality apart, is the greatest political misfortune to any statesman—a visibly selfish game. Very likely, too, the very high heroes of history—a Washington, an Aristides, by Carlyle profanely called "favourites of Dryasdust," would have extricated the country more easily, and perhaps more completely, from its scrape. Their ennobling rectitude would have kept M. de Girardin consistent, and induced M. Thiers to vote for the Revision of the Constitution; and even though, as of old, the Mountain were deafer than the uncharmed adder, a sufficient number of self-seeking Conservatives might have been induced by perfect confidence in a perfect President, to mend a crotchety performance, that was visibly ruining, what the poet calls, "The ever-ought-to-be-conserved-thing," their country.

I remember reading, several years ago, an article in the *Westminster Review*, on the lamented Armand Carrel, in which the author,[1] well known to be one of our most distinguished philosophers, took occasion to observe that what the French most wanted was "*un homme de caractère*". Everybody is aware—for all except myself know French quite perfectly—that this expression is not by any means equivalent to our common phrase, a "man of character," or "respectable individual," it does not at all refer to mere goodness: it is more like what we sometimes say of an eccentric country gentleman, "He is a character"; for it denotes a singular preponderance of peculiar qualities, an accomplished obstinacy, an inveterate fixedness of resolution and idea that enables him to get done what he undertakes. The Duke of Wellington is, "*par excellence*, *homme de caractère*"; Lord Palmerston rather so; Mr. Cobden a little; Lord John Russell not at all Now exactly this, beyond the immense majority of educated men, Louis Napoleon

[1] John Stuart Mill, October, 1837; reprinted in Mill's works.

is, as a pointed writer describes him: "The President is a superior man, but his superiority is of the sort that is hidden under a dubious exterior: his life is entirely internal; his speech does not betray his inspiration; his gesture does not copy his audacity; his look does not reflect his ardour; his step does not reveal his resolution; his whole mental nature is in some sort repressed by his physical: he thinks and does not discuss; he decides and does not deliberate; he acts without agitation; he speaks, and assigns no reason; his best friends are unacquainted with him; he obtains their confidence, but never asks it".[1] Also his whole nature is, and has been, absorbed in the task which he has undertaken. For many months, his habitual expression has been exactly that of a gambler who is playing for his highest and last stake; in society it is said to be the same—a general and diffusive politeness, but an ever-ready reflection and a constant reserve. His great qualities are rather peculiar. He is not, like his uncle, a creative genius, who will leave behind him social institutions such as those which nearly alone, in this changeful country, seem to be always exempt from every change; he will suggest little; he has hardly an organising mind; but he will coolly estimate his own position and that of France; he will observe all dangers and compute all chances. He can act—he can be idle: he may work what is; he may administer the country. Anyhow, *il fera son possible*, and you know, in the nineteenth century, how much and how rare that is.

I see many people are advancing beautiful but untrue ethics about his private character. Thus I may quote as follows from a very estimable writer: "On the 15th October, he requested his passports and left Arenberg for London. In this capital he remained from the end of 1838 to the month of August, 1840. In these twenty months,

[1] M. de la Guersonnière in the Paris *Pays*.

instead of learning to command armies and govern empires, his days and nights, when not given to frivolous pleasures, were passed on the turf, in the betting-room, or in clubs where high play and desperate stakes roused the jaded energy of the *blasé* gambler."[1]

The notion of this gentleman clearly is, that a betting man can't in nature be a good statesman; that horse-racing is providentially opposed to political excellence; that "by an interesting illustration of the argument from design, we notice an antithesis alike marvellous and inevitable," between turf and tariffs. But, setting Paley for a moment apart, how is a man, by circumstances excluded from military and political life, and by birth from commercial pursuits, really and effectually to learn administration? Mr. Kirwan imagines that he should read all through Burke, common-place Tacitus, collate Cicero, and annotate Montesquieu. Yet take an analogous case. Suppose a man, shut out from trading life, is to qualify himself for the practical management of a counting-house. Do you fancy he will do it "by a judicious study of the principles of political economy," and by elaborately re-reading Adam Smith and John Mill? He had better be at Newmarket, and devote his *heures perdues* to the Oaks and the St. Leger. He may learn there what he will never acquire from literary study—the instinctive habit of applied calculation, which is essential to a merchant and extremely useful to a statesman. Where, too, did Sir Robert Walpole learn business, or Charles Fox, or anybody in the eighteenth century? And after all, M. Michel de Bourges gave the real solution of the matter. "Louis Napoleon," said the best orator of the Mountain, "may have had rather a stormy youth (laughter). But don't suppose that any one in all France imagines you, you *Messieurs*, of the immaculate majority,

[1] A. V. Kirwan, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, in *Fraser's Magazine* of Jan., 1852.

to be the least better (sensation). I am not speaking to saints" (uproar). If compared with contemporary French statesmen, and the practical choice is between him and them, the President will not seem what he appears when measured by the notions of a people who exact at least from inferior functionaries *a rigid decorum in the pettiest details of their private morals*.

I have but one last point to make about this *coup d'état*, and then I will release you from my writing. I do not know whether you in England rightly realise the French Socialism. Take, for instance, M. Proudhon, who is perhaps their ideal and perfect type. He was *représentant de la Seine* in the late Assembly, elected, which is not unimportant, after the publication of his books and on account of his opinions. In his *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, a very curious book—for he writes extremely well—after maintaining that our well-known but, as we imagine, advanced friends, Ledru Rollin, and Louis Blanc, and Barbès, and Blanqui, are all *réactionnaires*, and clearly showing, to the grief of mankind, that once the legislator of the Luxembourg wished to preserve "equilibrium," and the author of the provincial circulars to maintain "tranquillity," he gives the following *bonâ fide* and amusing account of his own investigations:—

"I commenced my task of solitary conspiracy by the study of the socialisms of antiquity, necessary, in my judgment, to determine the law, whether practical or theoretical, of progress. These socialisms I found in the Bible. A memoir on the institution of the Sabbath—considered with regard to morals, to health, and in its relation to the family and the city—procured for me a bronze medal from my academy. From the faith in which I had been reared, I had precipitated myself headlong, head-foremost, into pure reason, and already, what was wonderful and a good omen, when I made Moses a philosopher and a socialist, I was greeted with applause. If I am now in error, the fault is not merely mine. Was there ever a similar seduction?

"But I studied, above all, with a view to action. I cared little for

academical laurels. I had no leisure to become *savant*, still less a *littérateur* or an archæologist. I began immediately upon political economy.

"I had assumed as the rule of my investigations that every principle which, pushed to its consequences, should end in a contradiction, must be considered false and null; and that if this principle had been developed into an institution, the institution itself must be considered as factitious, as utopian.

"Furnished with this criterion, I chose for the subject of investigation what I found in society the most ancient, the most respectable, the most universal, the least controverted,—property. Everybody knows what happened; after a long, a minute, and, above all, an impartial analysis, I arrived, as an algebraist guided by his equations, to this surprising conclusion. Property, consider it as you will,—refer it to what principle you may, is a contradictory idea; and as the denial of property carries with it of necessity that of authority, I deduced immediately from my first axiom also this corollary, not less paradoxical, the true form of government is *anarchy*. Lastly, finding by a mathematical demonstration that no amelioration in the economy of society could be arrived at by its natural constitution, or without the concurrence and reflective adhesion of its members; observing, also, that there is a definite epoch in the life of societies, in which their progress, at first unreflecting, requires the intervention of the free reason of man, I concluded that this spontaneous and impulsive force (*cette force d'impulsion spontanée*), which we call Providence, is not everything in the affairs of this world: from that moment, without being an Atheist, I ceased to worship God. He'll get on without your so doing, said to me one day the *Constitutionnel*. Well: perhaps he may."

These theories have been expanded into many and weary volumes, and condensed into the famous phrase, "*La Propriété c'est le vol*"; and have procured their author, in his own sect, reputation and authority.

The *Constitutionnel* had another hit against M. Proudhon, a day or two ago. They presented their readers with two decrees in due official form (the walls were at the moment covered with those of the 2nd December), as the last ideal of what the straightest sect of the Socialists particularly desire. It was as follows: "Nothing any longer exists.

Nobody is charged with the execution of the aforesaid decree. Signed, Vacuum."

Such is the speculation of the new reformers—what their practices would be I can hardly tell you. My feeble income does not allow me to travel to the Basses Alpes and really investigate the subject; but if one quarter of the stories in circulation are in the least to be believed (we are quite dependent on oral information, for the Government papers deal in asterisks and "details unfit for publication," and the rest are devoted to the state of the navy and say nothing), the atrocities rival the nauseous corruption of what our liberal essayist calls "Jacobin carrion," the old days of Carrier and Barère.[1] This is what people here are afraid of; and that is why I write such things—and not to horrify you, or amuse you, or bore you—anything rather than that; and they think themselves happy in finding a man who, with or without whatever other qualities or defects, will keep them from the vaunted Millennium and much-expected *Jacquerie*. I hope you think so, too—and that I am not, as they say in my native Tipperary, "Whistling jigs to a mile-stone".

I am, sir, yours truly,

AMICUS.

P.S.—You will perhaps wish me to say something on the great event of this week, the exile of the more dangerous members of the late Assembly, and the transportation of the Socialists to Cayenne. Both measures were here expected; though I think that both lists are more numerous than was anticipated: but no one really knew what would be done by this silent Government. You will laugh at me when I tell you that both measures have been well received: but properly limited and understood, I am persuaded that the fact is so.

[1] Macaulay: Close of Essay on Barère. (Forrest Morgan.)

Of course, among the friends of exiled *représentants*, among the *littérateurs* throughout whose ranks these measures are intended to "strike terror and inspire respect," [1] you would hear that there never was such tyranny since the beginning of mankind. But among the mass of the industrious classes—between whom and the politicians there is internecine war—I fancy that on turning the conversation to either of the most recent events, you would hear something of this sort: "*Ça ne m'occupe pas*". "What is that to *me?*" "*Je suis pour la tranquillité, moi.*" "I sold four brooches yesterday." The Socialists who have been removed from prison to the colony, it is agreed were "pestilent fellows perverting the nation," and forbidding to pay tribute to M. Bonaparte. Indeed, they can hardly expect commercial sympathy. "Our national honour rose—our stocks fell," is Louis Blanc's perpetual comment on his favourite events, and it is difficult to say which of its two clauses he dwells upon with the intenser relish. It is generally thought by those who think about the matter, that both the transportation, and in all cases, certainly, the exile will only be a temporary measure, and that the great mass of the people in both lists will be allowed to return to their homes when the present season of extreme excitement has passed over. Still, I am not prepared to defend the *number* of transportations. That strong measures of the sort were necessary, I make no doubt. If Socialism exist, and the fear of it exist, something must be done to reassure the people. You will understand that it is not a judicial proceeding either in essence or in form; it is not to be considered as a punishment for what men have done, but as a perfect precaution against what they may do. Certainly, it is to be regretted that the cause of order is so weak as to need such measures; but if it *is* so weak, the Government must no doubt take them. Of course, however,

[1] Kinglake: *Eöthen.* (Forrest Morgan.)

"our brethren," who are retained in such numbers to write down Prince Louis, are quite right to use without stint or stopping this most un-English proceeding; it is their case, and you and I from old misdeeds know pretty well how it is to be managed. There will be no imputation of reasonable or humane motives to the Government, and no examination of the existing state of France: let both these come from the other side—but elegiac eloquence is inexhaustibly exuded —the cruel corners of history are ransacked for petrifying precedents—and I observe much excellent weeping on the Cromwellian deportations and the ten years' exile of Madame de Staël. But after all they have missed the tempting parallel—I mean the "rather long" proscription list which Octavius—"*l'ancien neveu de l'ancien oncle*"—concocted with Mark Antony in the marshes of Bononia, and whereby they thoroughly purged old Rome of its turbulent and revolutionary elements. I suspect our estimable contemporaries regret to remember of how much good order, long tranquillity, "*beata pleno copia cornu*" and other many "little comforts" to the civilised world that very "strong" proceeding, whether in ethics justifiable or not, certainly was in fact the beginning and foundation.

The fate of the African generals is much to be regretted, and the Government will incur much odium if the exile of General Changarnier is prolonged any length of time. He is doubtless "dangerous" for the moment, for his popularity with the army is considerable, and he divides the party of order; he is also a practical man and an unpleasant enemy, but he is much respected and little likely (I fancy) to attempt anything against any settled Government.

As for M. Thiers and M. Emile de Girardin—the ablest of the exiles—I have heard no one pity them; they have played a selfish game—they have encountered a better player—they have been beaten—and this is the whole matter.

You will remember that it was the adhesion of these two men that procured for M. Bonaparte a large part of his *first* six millions. M. de Girardin, whom General Cavaignac had discreetly imprisoned and indiscreetly set free, wrote up the "opposition candidate" daily, in the *Presse* (he has since often and often tried to write him down), and M. Thiers was his Privy Councillor. "*Mon cher Prince*," they say, said the latter, "your address to the people won't do at all. I'll get one of the *rédacteurs* of the *Constitutionnel* to draw you up something tolerable." You remember the easy patronage with which Cicero speaks in his letter of the "boy" that was outwitting him all the while. But, however, observe I do not at all, notwithstanding my Latin, insinuate or assert that Louis Napoleon, though a considerable man, is exactly equal to keep the footsteps of Augustus. A feeble parody may suffice for an inferior stage and not too gigantic generation. Now I really *have* done.

Letter III.

ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF FRANCE AND THE APTITUDE OF THE FRENCH CHARACTER FOR NATIONAL FREEDOM.

Paris, 20*th Jan.*, 1852.

Sir,—We have now got our Constitution. The Napoleonic era has commenced; the term of the dictatorship is fixed and the consolidation of France is begun. You will perhaps anticipate from the conclusion of the last letter, that *à propos* of this great event, I should gratify you with bright anticipations of an Augustan age, and a quick revival of Catonic virtue, with an assurance that the night is surely passed and the day altogether come, with a solemn invoca-

tion to the rising luminary, and an original panegyric on the "golden throned morning".

I must always regret to disappoint any one; but I feel obliged to entertain you instead with torpid philosophy, constitutional details, and a dull disquisition on national character.

The details of the new institutions you will have long ago learnt from the daily papers. I believe they may be fairly and nearly accurately described as the Constitution of the Consulate, *minus* the ideas of the man who made it. You will remember that, besides the First Magistrate, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Council of State (which we may call, in legal language, the "common form" of continental constitution), the ingenious Abbé Sieyès had devised some four principal peculiarities, which were to be remembered to all time as masterpieces of political invention. These were the utter inaction of the First Magistrate, copied, as I believe, from the English Constitution—the subordination to him of two Consuls, one to administer peace and the other war, who were intended to be the real hands and arms of the Government—the silence of the Senate—the double and very peculiar election of the House of Representatives. Napoleon the Great, as we are now to speak, struck out the first of these, being at the moment working some fifteen hours a day at the reorganisation of France. He said plainly and rather sternly that he had no intention of doing nothing—the *idéologue* went to the wall—the "excellent idea" put forth in happy forgetfulness of real facts and real people was instantly abandoned—for the Grand Elector was substituted a First Consul, who, so far from being nothing, was very soon the whole Government. Napoleon the Little, as I fear the Parisian multitude may learn to call him, has effaced the other three "strokes of statesmanship". The new Constitution of France is exactly the "common form" of political conveyancing,

plus the *Idée Napoléonienne* of an all-suggesting and all-administering mind.

I have extremely little to tell you about its reception; it has made no "sensation," not so much as even the "fortified camps" which his Grace is said to be devising for the defence of our own London. Indeed, "*Il a peur*" is a very common remark (conceivable to everybody who knows "the Duke"), and it would seem even a refreshing alleviation of their domestic sorrows. In fact, home politics are now *the* topic; geography and the state of foreign institutions are not, indeed, the true Parisian line—but it has, in fine, been distinctly discovered that there are no *salons* in Cayenne, which, once certain, the logical genius of the nation, with incredible swiftness, deduced the clear conclusion that it was better not to go there. Seriously, I fancy—for I have no data on which to found real knowledge of so delicate a point—the new Constitution is regarded merely as what Father Newman would call a "preservative addition" or a "necessary development," essential to the "chronic continuance" of the Napoleonic system; for the moment the mass of the people wish the President to govern them, but they don't seem to me to care how. The political people, I suppose, hate it, because for some time it will enable him, if not shot, to govern effectually. I say, if not shot—for people are habitually recounting under their breath some new story of an attempt at assassination, which the papers suppress. I am inclined to think that these rumours are pure lies; but they show the feeling. You know, according to the Constitution of 1848, the President would now be a mere outlaw, and whoever finds him may slay him, if he can. It is true that the elaborate masterpiece of M. Marrast is already fallen into utter oblivion (it is no more remembered than yesterday's *Times*, or the political institutions of Saxon Mercia); but nevertheless such, according to the ante-

diluvian *régime*, would be the law, and it is possible that a mindful Montagnard may upon occasion recall even so insignificant a circumstance.

I have a word to say on the Prologue of the President. When I first began to talk politics with French people, I was much impressed by the fact to which he has there drawn attention. You know that all such conversation, when one of the interlocutors is a foreigner, speaking slowly and but imperfectly the language of the country in which he is residing, is pretty much in the style of that excellent work which was the terror of our childhood—Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues*—wherein, as you may remember, an accomplished tutor, with a singular gift of scholastic improvisation, instructs a youthful pupil exceedingly given to feeble questions and auscultatory repose. Now, when I began in Parisian society thus to enact the *rôle* of "George" or "Caroline," I was, I repeat, much struck with the fact that the Emperor had done everything: to whatever subject my diminutive inquiry related, the answer was nearly universally the same —an elegy on Napoleon. Nor is this exactly absurd; for whether or not "the nephew" is right in calling the uncle the greatest of modern statesmen, he is indisputably the modern statesman who has founded the greatest number of existing institutions. In the pride of philosophy and in the madness of an hour, the Constituent Assembly and the Convention swept away not only the monstrous abuses of the old *régime*, but that *régime* itself—its essence and its mechanism, utterly and entirely. They destroyed whatever they could lay their hands on. The consequence was certain —when they tried to construct they found they had no materials. They left a vacuum. No greater benefit could have been conferred on politicians gifted with the creative genius of Napoleon. It was like the fire of London to Sir Christopher Wren. With a fertility of invention and an

obstinacy in execution, equalling, if not surpassing, those of Cæsar and Charlemagne, he had before him an open stage, more clear and more vast than in historical times fortune has ever offered to any statesman. He was nearly in the position of the imagined legislator of the Greek legends and the Greek philosophers—he could enact any law, and rescind any law. Accordingly, the educational system, the banking system, the financial system, the municipal system, the administrative system, the civil legislation, the penal legislation, the commercial legislation (besides all manner of secondary creations—public buildings and public institutions without number), all date from the time, and are more or less deeply inscribed with the genius, the firm will, and unresting energies of Napoleon. And this, which is the great strength of the present President, is the great difficulty—I fear the insurmountable difficulty—in the way of Henry the Fifth. The first revolution is to the French what the deluge is to the rest of mankind; the whole system then underwent an entire change. A French politician will no more cite as authority the domestic policy of Colbert or Louvois than we should think of going for ethics and æsthetics to the bigamy of Lamech, or the musical accomplishments of Tubal Cain. If the Comte de Chambord be (as it is quite on the cards that he may be) within a few years restored, he must govern by the instrumentality of laws and systems devised by the politicians whom he execrates and denounces, and devised, moreover, often enough, especially to keep out him and his. It is difficult to imagine that a strong Government can be composed of materials so inharmonious. Meanwhile, to the popular imagination, "the Emperor" is the past; the House of Bourbon is as historical as the House of Valois; a peasant is little oftener reminded of the "third dynasty" than of the long-haired kings.

In discussing any Constitution, there are two ideas to be first got rid of. The first is the idea of our barbarous ancestors—now happily banished from all civilised society, but still prevailing in old manor-houses, in rural parsonages, and other curious repositories of mouldering ignorance, and which in such arid solitudes is thus expressed: "Why can't they have Kings, Lords and Commons, *like we have?* What fools foreigners are." The second pernicious mistake is, like the former, seldom now held upon system, but so many hold it in bits and fragments, and without system, that it is still rather formidable. I allude to the old idea which still here creeps out in conversation, and sometimes in writing,—that politics are simply a subdivision of immutable ethics; that there are certain rights of men in all places and all times, which are the sole and sufficient foundation of all government, and that accordingly a single stereotype Government is to make the tour of the world—that you have no more right to deprive a Dyak of his vote in a "possible" Polynesian Parliament, than you have to steal his mat.

Burke first taught the world at large, in opposition to both, and especially to the latter of these notions, that politics are made of time and place—that institutions are shifting things, to be tried by and adjusted to the shifting conditions of a mutable world—that, in fact, politics are but a piece of business—to be determined in every case by the exact exigencies of that case; in plain English—by sense and circumstances.

This was a great step in political philosophy—though it *now* seems the events of 1848 have taught thinking persons (I fancy) further. They have enabled us to say that of all these circumstances so affecting political problems, by far and out of all question the most important is *national character.* In that year the same experiment—the experiment,

as its friends say, of Liberal and Constitutional Government —as its enemies say, of Anarchy and Revolution—was tried in every nation of Europe—with what varying futures and differing results! The effect has been to teach men—not only speculatively to know, but practically to feel, that no absurdity is so great as to imagine the same species of institutions suitable or possible for Scotchmen and Sicilians, for Germans and Frenchmen, for the English and the Neapolitans. With a well-balanced national character (we now know) liberty is a stable thing. A really practical people will work in political business, as in private business, almost the absurdest, the feeblest, the most inconsistent set of imaginable regulations. Similarly, or rather reversely, the best institutions will not keep right a nation that *will* go wrong. Paper is but paper, and no virtue is to be discovered in it to retain within due boundaries the undisciplined passions of those who have never set themselves seriously to restrain them. In a word—as people of "large roundabout common-sense" will (as a rule) somehow get on in life—no matter what their circumstances or their fortune—so a nation which applies good judgment, forbearance, a rational and compromising habit to the management of free institutions, will certainly succeed; while the more eminently gifted national character will but be a source and germ of endless and disastrous failure, if, with whatever other eminent qualities, it be deficient in these plain, solid, and essential requisites.

The formation of *this* character is one of the most secret of marvellous mysteries. Why nations have the character we see them to have is, speaking generally, as little explicable to our shallow perspicacity, as why individuals, our friends or our enemies, for good or for evil, have the character which they have; why one man is stupid and another clever—why another volatile and a fourth consistent—this

man by instinct generous, and that man by instinct niggardly. I am not speaking of actions, you observe, but of tendencies and temptations. These and other similar problems daily crowd on our observation in millions and millions, and only do not puzzle us because we are too familiar with their difficulty to dream of attempting their solution. Only this much is most certain,—all men and all nations have a character, and that character, when once taken, is, I do not say unchangeable—religion modifies it, catastrophe annihilates it—but the least changeable thing in this ever-varying and changeful world. Take the soft mind of the boy, and (strong and exceptional aptitudes and tendencies excepted) you may make him merchant, barrister, butcher, baker, surgeon, or apothecary. But once make him an apothecary, and he will never afterwards bake wholesome bread—make him a butcher, and he will kill too extensively, even for a surgeon—make him a barrister, and he will be dim on double entry, and crass on bills of lading. Once conclusively form him to one thing, and no art and no science will ever twist him to another. Nature, says the philosopher, has no Delphic daggers!—no men or maids of all work—she keeps one being to one pursuit—to each is a single choice afforded, but no more again thereafter for ever. And it is the same with nations. The Jews of to-day are the Jews in face and form of the Egyptian sculptures; in character they are the Jews of Moses—the negro is the negro of a thousand years—the Chinese, by his own account, is the mummy of a million. "Races and their varieties," says the historian, "seem to have been created with an inward *nisus* diminishing with the age of the world." The people of the South are yet the people of the South, fierce and angry as their summer sun—the people of the North are still cold and stubborn like their own north wind—the people of the East "mark not, but are still"—the people of

the West "are going through the ends of the earth, and walking up and down in it". The fact is certain, the cause beyond us. The subtle system of obscure causes, whereby sons and daughters resemble not only their fathers and mothers, but even their great-great-grandfathers and their great-great-grandmothers, may very likely be destined to be very inscrutable. But as the fact is so, so moreover, in history, nations have one character, one set of talents, one list of temptations, and one duty—to use the one and get the better of the other. There are breeds in the animal man just as in the animal dog. When you hunt with greyhounds and course with beagles, then, and not till then, may you expect the inbred habits of a thousand years to pass away, that Hindoos can be free, or that Englishmen will be slaves.

I need not prove to you that the French *have* a national character. Nor need I try your patience with a likeness of it. I have only to examine whether it be a fit basis for national freedom. I fear you will laugh when I tell you what I conceive to be about the most essential mental quality for a free people, whose liberty is to be progressive, permanent, and on a large scale; it is much *stupidity*. I see you are surprised—you are going to say to me, as Socrates did to Polus, "My young friend, *of course* you are right; but will you explain what you mean?—as yet you are not intelligible". I will do so as well as I can, and endeavour to make good what I say—not by an *a priori* demonstration of my own, but from the details of the present, and the facts of history. Not to begin by wounding any present susceptibilities, let me take the Roman character—for, with one great exception—I need not say to whom I allude—they are the great political people of history. Now, is not a certain dulness their most visible characteristic? What is the history of their

speculative mind?—a blank. What their literature?—a copy. They have left not a single discovery in any abstract science; not a single perfect or well-formed work of high imagination. The Greeks, the perfection of narrow and accomplished genius, bequeathed to mankind the ideal forms of self-idolising art—the Romans imitated and admired; the Greeks explained the laws of Nature—the Romans wondered and despised; the Greeks invented a system of numerals second only to that now in use—the Romans counted to the end of their days with the clumsy apparatus which we still call by their name; the Greeks made a capital and scientific calendar—the Romans began their month when the Pontifex Maximus happened to spy out the new moon. Throughout Latin literature, this is the perpetual puzzle—Why are we free and they slaves? we prætors and they barbers? Why do the stupid people always win, and the clever people always lose? I need not say that, in real sound stupidity, the English are unrivalled. You'll hear more wit, and better wit, in an Irish street row than would keep Westminster Hall in humour for five weeks. Or take Sir Robert Peel—our last great statesman, the greatest Member of Parliament that ever lived, an absolutely perfect transactor of public business—the type of the nineteenth-century Englishman, as Sir R. Walpole was of the eighteenth. Was there ever such a dull man? Can any one, without horror, foresee the reading of his memoirs? A *clairvoyante*, with the book shut, may get on; but who now, in the flesh, will ever endure the open *vision* of endless recapitulation of interminable Hansard? Or take Mr. Tennyson's inimitable description:—

> "No little lily-handed Baronet he,
> A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman,
> A lord of fat prize oxen and of sheep,
> A raiser of huge melons and of pine,

> A patron of some thirty charities,
> A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
> A quarter sessions chairman, abler none". [1]

Whose company so soporific? His talk is of truisms and bullocks; his head replete with rustic visions of mutton and turnips, and a cerebral edition of Burn's *Justice!* Notwithstanding, he is the salt of the earth, the best of the English breed. Who is like him for sound sense? But I must restrain my enthusiasm. You don't want me to tell you that a Frenchman—a real Frenchman—can't be stupid; *esprit* is his essence, wit is to him as water, *bons-mots* as *bonbons*. He reads and he learns by reading; levity and literature are essentially his line. Observe the consequence. The outbreak of 1848 was accepted in every province in France; the decrees of the Parisian mob were received and registered in all the municipalities of a hundred cities; the Revolution ran like the fluid of the telegraph down the *Chemin de fer du Nord;* it stopped at the Belgian frontier. Once brought into contact with the dull phlegm of the stupid Fleming, the poison was powerless. You remember what the Norman butler said to Wilkin Flammock, of the fulling mills, at the castle of the Garde Douloureuse: "That draught which will but warm your Flemish hearts, will put wildfire into Norman brains; and what may only encourage your countrymen to man the walls, will make ours fly over the battlements". [2] *Les braves Belges*, I make no doubt, were quite pleased to observe what folly was being exhibited by those very clever French, whose tongue they want to speak, and whose literature they try to imitate. In fact, what we opprobriously call stupidity, though not an enlivening quality in common society, is Nature's favourite resource for preserving steadiness of conduct and consistency of opinion. It enforces concen-

[1] "The Princess." [2] *The Betrothed*, chap. iii.

tration; people who learn slowly, learn only what they must. The best security for people's doing their duty is, that they should not know anything else to do; the best security for fixedness of opinion is, that people should be incapable of comprehending what is to be said on the other side. These valuable truths are no discoveries of mine. They are familiar enough to people whose business it is to know them. Hear what a dense and aged attorney says of your peculiarly promising barrister: "Sharp! oh yes, yes! he's too sharp by half. He is not *safe;* not a minute, isn't that young man." "What style, sir," asked of an East India Director some youthful aspirant for literary renown, "is most to be preferred in the composition of official despatches?" "My good fellow," responded the ruler of Hindostan, "the style *as we* like is the Humdrum." I extend this, and advisedly maintain that nations, just as individuals, may be too clever to be practical, and not dull enough to be free.

How far this is true of the French, and how far the gross deficiency I have indicated is modified by their many excellent qualities, I hope at a future time to inquire.

I am, sir, yours truly,

AMICUS.

LETTER IV.

ON THE APTITUDE OF THE FRENCH CHARACTER FOR NATIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

PARIS, *29th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—There is a simple view of the subject on which I wrote you last week, that I wish to bring under your notice. The experiment (as it is called) of establishing

political freedom in France is now sixty years old; and the best that we can say of it is, that it is an experiment still. There have been perhaps half a dozen new beginnings—half a dozen complete failures. I am aware that each of these failures can be excellently explained—each beginning shown to be quite necessary. But there are certain reasonings which, though outwardly irrefragable, the crude human mind is always most unwilling to accept. Among these are different and subtle explications of several apparently similar facts. Thus, to choose an example suited to the dignity of my subject, if a gentleman from town takes a day's shooting in the country, and should chance (as has happened) at first going off, to miss some six times running, how luminously soever he may "explain" each failure as it occurs, however "expanded a view" he may take of the whole series, whatever popular illustrations of projectile philosophy he may propound to the bird-slaying agriculturists—the impression on the crass intelligence of the gamekeeper will quite clearly be, "He beint noo shot homsoever—aint thickeer". Similarly, to compare small things with great, when I myself read in Thiers and the many other philosophic historians of this literary country, various and excellent explanations of their many mischances;—of the failure of the constitution of 1791—of the constitution of the year 3—of the constitution of the year 5—of the *charte*—of the system of 1830—and now we may add, of the Second Republic—the annotated constitution of M. Dupin;—I can't help feeling a suspicion lingering in my crude and uncultivated intellect—that some common principle is at work in all and each of these several cases—that over and above all odd mischances, so many bankruptcies a little suggest an unfitness for the trade; that besides the ingenious reasons of ingenious gentlemen, there is some lurking quality, or want of a quality, in the national character of

the French nation which renders them but poorly adapted for the form of freedom and constitution which they have so often, with such zeal and so vainly, attempted to establish.

In my last letter I suggested that this might be what I ventured to call a "want of stupidity". I will now try to describe what I mean in more accurate, though not, perhaps, more intelligible words.

I believe that I am but speaking what is agreed on by competent observers, when I say that the essence of the French character is a certain mobility; that is, as it has been defined, a certain "excessive sensibility to *present* impressions," which is sometimes "levity,"—for it issues in a postponement of seemingly fixed principles to a momentary temptation or a transient whim; sometimes "impatience,"—as leading to an exaggerated sense of existing evils; often "excitement,"—a total absorption in existing emotion; oftener "inconsistency,"—the sacrifice of old habits to present emergencies; and yet other unfavourable qualities. But it has also its favourable side. The same man who is drawn aside from old principles by small pleasures, who can't bear pain, who forgets his old friends when he ceases to see them, who is liable in time of excitement to be a one-idea being, with no conception of anything but the one exciting object, yet who nevertheless is apt to have one idea to-day and quite another to-morrow (and this, and more than this, may, I fancy, be said of the ideal Frenchman), may and will have the subtlest perception of existing niceties, the finest susceptibility to social pleasure, the keenest tact in social politeness, the most consummate skilfulness in the details of action and administration,—may, in short, be the best companion, the neatest man of business, the lightest *homme de salon*, the acutest diplomat of the existing world.

It is curious to observe how this reflects itself in their literature. "I will believe," remarks Montaigne, "in anything rather than in any man's consistency." What observer of English habits—what person inwardly conscious of our dull and unsusceptible English nature, would ever say so? Rather in our country obstinacy is the commonest of the vices, and perseverance the cheapest of the virtues. Again, when they attempt history, the principal peculiarity (a few exceptions being allowed for) is an utter incapacity to describe graphically a long-passed state of society. Take, for instance—assuredly no unfavourable example—M. Guizot. His books, I need not say, are nearly unrivalled for eloquence, for philosophy and knowledge; you read there, how in the middle age there were many "principles"; the principle of Legitimacy, the principle of Feudalism, the principle of Democracy; and you come to know how one grew, and another declined, and a third crept slowly on; and the mind is immensely edified, when perhaps at the 315th page a proper name occurs, and you mutter, "Dear me, why, if there were not *people* in the time of Charlemagne! Who would have thought that?" But in return for this utter incapacity to describe the people of past times, a Frenchman has the gift of perfectly describing the people of his own. No one knows so well—no one can tell so well—the facts of his own life. The French memoirs, the French letters are, and have been, the admiration of Europe. Is not now Jules Janin unrivalled at pageants and *prima donnas?*

It is the same in poetry. As a recent writer excellently remarks: "A French Dante, or Michael Angelo, or Cervantes, or Murillo, or Goethe, or Shakespeare, or Milton, we at once perceive to be a mere anomaly; a supposition which may indeed be proposed in terms, but which in reality is inconceivable and impossible." Yet, in requital as it were of this great deficiency, they have a wonderful capacity for express-

ing and delineating the poetical and voluptuous element of everyday life. We know the biography of De Béranger. The young ladies whom he has admired—the wine that he has preferred—the fly that buzzed on the ceiling, and interrupted his delicious and dreaming solitude, are as well known to us as the recollections of our own lives. As in their common furniture, so in their best poetry. The materials are nothing; reckon up what you have been reading, and it seems a *congeries* of stupid trifles; begin to read, —the skill of the workmanship is so consummate, the art so high and so latent, that while time flows silently on, our fancies are enchanted and our memories indelibly impressed. How often, asks Mr. Thackeray, have we read De Béranger—how often Milton? Certainly, since Horace, there has been no such manual of the philosophy of this world.

I will not say that the quality which I have been trying to delineate is exactly the same thing as "cleverness". But I do allege that it is sufficiently near it for the rough purposes of popular writing. For this *quickness* in taking in —so to speak—the present, gives a corresponding celerity of intellectual apprehension, an amazing readiness in catching new ideas and maintaining new theories, a versatility of mind which enters into and comprehends everything as it passes, a concentration in what occurs, so as to use it for every purpose of illustration, and consequently (if it happen to be combined with the least fancy), quick repartee on the subject of the moment, and *bons-mots* also without stint and without end—and these qualities are rather like what we style cleverness. And what I call a proper stupidity keeps a man from all the defects of this character; it chains the gifted possessor mainly to his old ideas; it takes him seven weeks to comprehend an atom of a new one; it keeps him from being led away by new theories—for there is nothing which bores him so much; it restrains him within his old

pursuits, his well-known habits, his tried expedients, his verified conclusions, his traditional beliefs. He is not tempted to "levity," or "impatience," for he does not see the joke, and is thick-skinned to present evils. Inconsistency puts him out,—"What I says is this here, as I was saying yesterday," is his notion of historical eloquence and habitual discretion. He is very slow indeed to be "excited,"—his passions, his feelings, and his affections are dull and tardy strong things, falling in a certain known direction, fixing on certain known objects, and for the most part acting in a moderate degree, and at a sluggish pace. You always know where to find his mind.

Now this is exactly what, in politics at least, you do not know about a Frenchman. I like—I have heard a good judge say—to hear a Frenchman talk. He strikes a light, but what light he will strike it is impossible to predict. I think he doesn't know himself. Now, I know you see at once how this would operate on a Parliamentary Government, but I give you a gentle illustration. All England knows Mr. Disraeli, the witty orator, the exceedingly clever *littérateur*, the versatile politician; and all England has made up its mind that the stupidest country gentleman would be a better Home Secretary than the accomplished descendant of the "Caucasian race". Now suppose, if you only can, a House of Commons all Disraelis, and do you imagine that Parliament would work? It would be what M. Proudhon said of some French assemblies, "a box of matches".

The same quality acts in another way, and produces to English ideas a most marvellous puzzle, both in the philosophical literature and the political discussion of the French. I mean their passion for logical deduction. The habitual mode of argument is to get hold of some large principle; to begin to deduce immediately; and to reason down from it to the most trivial details of common action. *Il faut être con-*

séquent avec soi-même—is their fundamental maxim; and in a world the essence of which is compromise, they could not well have a worse. I hold, metaphysically perhaps, that this is a consequence of that same impatience of disposition to which I have before alluded. Nothing is such a bore as looking for your principles—nothing so pleasant as working them out. People who have thought, know that inquiry is suffering. A child stumbling timidly in the dark is not more different from the same child playing on a sunny lawn, than is the philosopher groping, hesitating, doubting and blundering about his primitive postulates, from the same philosopher proudly deducing and commenting on the certain consequences of his established convictions. On this account Mathematics have been called the paradise of the mind. In Euclid at least, you have your principles, and all that is required is acuteness in working them out. The long annals of science are one continued commentary on this text. Read in Bacon, the beginner of intellectual philosophy in England, and every page of the *Advancement of Learning* is but a continued warning against the tendency of the human mind to start at once to the last generalities from a few and imperfectly observed particulars. Read in the *Méditations* of Descartes, the beginner of intellectual philosophy in France, and in every page (once I read five) you will find nothing but the strictest, the best, the most lucid, the most logical deduction of all things actual and possible, from a few principles obtained without evidence, and retained in defiance of probability. Deduction is a game, and induction a grievance. Besides, clever impatient people want not only to learn, but to teach. And instruction expresses at least the alleged possession of knowledge. The obvious way is to shorten the painful, the slow, the tedious, the wearisome process of preliminary inquiry—to assume something pretty—to establish its consequences—

discuss their beauty—exemplify their importance—extenuate their absurdities. A little vanity helps all this. Life is short—art is long—truth lies deep—take some side—found your school—open your lecture-rooms—tuition is dignified—learning is low.

I do not know that I can exhibit the way these qualities of the French character operate on their opinions, better than by telling you how the Roman Catholic Church deals with them. I have rather attended to it since I came here; it gives sermons almost an interest, their being in French—and to those curious in intellectual matters it is worth observing. In other times, and even now in out-of-the-way Spain I suppose it may be so, the Catholic Church was opposed to inquiry and reasoning. But it is not so now, and here. Loudly—from the pens of a hundred writers—from the tongues of a thousand pulpits—in every note of thrilling scorn and exulting derision, she proclaims the contrary. Be she Christ's workman, or Anti-Christ's, she knows her work too well.—"Reason, Reason, Reason!"—exclaims she to the philosophers of this world—"Put in practice what you teach, if you would have others believe it; be consistent; do not prate to us of private judgment when you are but yourselves repeating what you heard in the nursery—ill-mumbled remnants of a Catholic tradition. No! exemplify what you command, inquire and make search—seek, though we warn you that ye will never find—yet do as ye will. Shut yourself up in a room—make your mind a blank—go down (as ye speak) into the 'depths of your consciousness'—scrutinise the mental structure—inquire for the elements of belief—spend years, your best years, in the occupation; and at length—when your eyes are dim, and your brain hot, and your hand unsteady—then reckon what you have gained: see if you cannot count on your fingers the certainties you have reached: reflect which

of them you doubted yesterday, which you may disbelieve to-morrow; or rather, make haste—assume at random some essential *credenda*—write down your inevitable postulates—enumerate your necessary axioms—toil on, toil on—spin your spider's web—adore your own souls—or, if you prefer it, choose some German nostrum—try the intellectual intuition, or the 'pure reason,' or the 'intelligible' ideas, or the mesmeric *clairvoyance*—and when so or somehow you have attained your results, try them on mankind. Don't go out into the highways and hedges—it's unnecessary. Ring the bell—call in the servants—give them a course of lectures—cite Aristotle—review Descartes—panegyrise Plato—and see if the *bonne* will understand you. It is you that say '*Vox populi—Vox Dei*'; but you see the people reject you. Or, suppose you succeed—what you call succeeding—your books are read; for three weeks, or even a season, you are the idol of the *salons*; your hard words are on the lips of women; then a change comes—a new actress appears at the Théâtre Français or the Opéra—her charms eclipse your theories; or a great catastrophe occurs—political liberty (it is said) is annihilated—*il faut se faire mouchard*, is the observation of scoffers. Anyhow, *you* are forgotten—fifty years may be the gestation of a philosophy, not three its life—before long, before you go to your grave, your six disciples leave you for some newer master, or to set up for themselves. The poorest priest in the remote region of the Basses Alpes has more power over men's souls than human cultivation; his ill-mouthed masses move women's souls—can you? Ye scoff at Jupiter. Yet he at least was believed in—you never have been; idol for idol, the *de*throned is better than the *un*throned. No, if you would reason—if you would teach—if you would speculate, come to us. We have our *premises* ready; years upon years before you were born, intellects whom the best of you

delight to magnify, toiled to systematise the creed of ages; years upon years after you are dead, better heads than yours will find new matter there to define, to divide, to arrange. Consider the hundred volumes of Aquinas—which of you desire a higher life than that? To deduce, to subtilise, discriminate, systematise, and decide the highest truth, and to be believed. Yet such was his luck, his enjoyment. He was what you would be. No, no—*Credite, credite.* Ours is the life of speculation—the cloister is the home for the student. Philosophy is stationary—Catholicism progressive. You call—we are heard," etc., etc., etc. So speaks each preacher according to his ability. And when the dust and noise of present controversies have passed away, and in the silence of the night, some grave historian writes out the tale of half-forgotten times, let him not forget to observe that skilfully as the mediæval Church subdued the superstitious cravings of a painful and barbarous age—in after-years she dealt more discerningly still with the feverish excitement, the feeble vanities, and the dogmatic impatience of an over-intellectual generation.

And as in religion—so in politics, we find the same desire to teach rather than to learn—the same morbid appetite for exhaustive and original theories. It is as necessary for a public writer to have a system as it is for him to have a pen. His course is obvious; he assumes some grand principle—the principle of Legitimacy, or the principle of Equality, or the principle of Fraternity—and thence he reasons down without fear or favour to the details of everyday politics. Events are judged of, not by their relation to simple causes, but by their bearing on a remote axiom. Nor are these speculations mere exercises of philosophic ingenuity. Four months ago, hundreds of able writers were debating with the keenest ability and the most ample array of generalities, whether the country should be

governed by a Legitimate Monarchy, or an illegitimate; by a Social, or an old-fashioned Republic; by a two-chambered Constitution, or a one-chambered Constitution; on "Revision," or Non-revision; on the claims of Louis Napoleon, or the divine right of the national representation. Can any intellectual food be conceived more dangerous or more stimulating for an over-excitable population? It is the same in Parliament. The description of the Church of Corinth may stand for a description of the late Assembly: every one had a psalm, had a doctrine, had a tongue, had a revelation, had an interpretation. Each member of the Mountain had his scheme for the regeneration of mankind; each member of the vaunted majority had his scheme for newly consolidating the Government; Orleanist hated Legitimist, Legitimist Orleanist; moderate Republican detested undiluted Republican; scheme was set against scheme, and theory against theory. No two Conservatives would agree what to conserve; no Socialist could practically associate with any other. No deliberative assembly can exist with every member wishing to lead, and no one wishing to follow. Not the meanest Act of Parliament could be carried without more compromise than even the best French statesmen were willing to use on the most important and critical affairs of their country. Rigorous reasoning would not manage a parish vestry, much less a great nation. In England, to carry half your own crotchets, you must be always and everywhere willing to carry half another man's. Practical men must submit as well as rule, concede as well as assume. Popular government has many forms, a thousand good modes of procedure; but no one of those modes can be worked, no one of those forms will endure, unless by the continual application of sensible heads and pliable judgments to the systematic criticism of stiff axioms, rigid principles, and incarnated propositions. I am, etc.,

AMICUS.

P.S.—I was in hopes that I should have been able to tell you of the withdrawal of the decree relative to the property of the Orleans family. The withdrawal was announced in the *Constitutionnel* of yesterday; but I regret to add was contradicted in the *Patrie* last evening. I need not observe to you that it is an act for which there is no defence, moral or political. It has immensely weakened the Government.

The change of Ministry is also a great misfortune to Louis Napoleon. M. de Morny, said to be a son of Queen Hortense (if you believe the people in the *salons*, the President is not the son of his father, and everybody else is the son of his mother), was a statesman of the class best exemplified in England by the late Lord Melbourne—an acute, witty, fashionable man, acquainted with Parisian persons and things, and a consummate judge of public opinion. M. Persigny was in exile with the President, is said to be much attached to him, to repeat his sentiments and exaggerate his prejudices. I need not point out which of the two is just now the sounder counsellor.

Letter V.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRINCE-PRESIDENT.

Sir,—The many failures of the French in the attempt to establish a predominantly Parliamentary Government have a strong family likeness. Speaking a little roughly, I shall be right in saying that the Constitutions of France have perished, both lately and formerly, either in a street-row or under the violence of a military power, aided and abetted by a diffused dread of impending street-rows, and a painful experience of the effects of past ones. Thus the

Constitution of 1791 (the first of the old series) perished on 10th August, amid the exultation of the brewer Santerre. The last of the old series fell on the 18 Brumaire, under the hands of Napoleon, when the 5 per cents. were at 12, the whole country in disorder, and all ruinable persons ruined. The Monarchy of 1830 began in the riot of the three days, and ended in the riot of 24th February; the Republic of February perished but yesterday, mainly from terror that Paris might again see such days as the "days of June".

I think all sensible Englishmen who review this history (the history of more than sixty years) will not be slow to divine a conclusion peculiarly agreeable to our orderly national habits, *viz.*, that the first want of the French is somebody or something able and willing to keep down street-rows, to repress the frightful elements of revolution and disorder which, every now and then, astonish Europe; capable of maintaining, and desirous to maintain, the order and tranquillity which are (all agree) the essential and primary pre-requisites of industry and civilisation. If any one seriously and calmly doubts this, I am afraid nothing that I can further say will go far in convincing him. But let him read the account of any scene in any French revolution, old or new, or, better, let him come here and learn how people look back to the time I have mentioned (to June, 1848), when the Socialists,—not under speculative philosophers like Proudhon or Louis Blanc, but under practical rascals and energetic murderers, like Sobrier and Caussidière—made their last and final stand, and against them, on the other side, the National Guard (mostly solid shopkeepers, three-parts ruined by the events of February) fought (I will not say bravely or valiantly, but) furiously, frantically, savagely, as one reads in old books that half-starved burgesses in beleaguered towns have sometimes

fought for the food of their children; let any sceptic hear of the atrocities of the friends of order and the atrocities of the advocates of disorder, and he will, I imagine, no longer be sceptical on two points,—he will hope that if he ever have to fight it will not be with a fanatic Socialist, nor against a demi-bankrupt fighting for "his shop"; and he will admit, that in a country subject to collisions between two such excited and excitable combatants, no earthly blessing is in any degree comparable to a power which will stave off, long delay, or permanently prevent, the actual advent and ever-ready apprehension of such bloodshed. I therefore assume that the first condition of good government in this country is a really strong, a reputedly strong, a continually strong Executive power.

Now, on the face of matters, it is certainly true that such a power is perfectly consistent with the most perfect, the most ideal type of Parliamentary government. Rather I should say, such and so strong an executive is a certain consequence of the existence of that ideal and rarely found type. If there is among the people, and among their representatives, a strong, a decided, an unflinching preference for particular Ministers, or a particular course of policy, that course of policy can be carried out, and will be carried out, as certainly as by the Czar Nicholas, whose Ministers can do exactly what they will. There was something very like this in the old days of King George III., of Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Perceval. In those times, I have been told, the great Treasury official of the day, Mr. George Rose (still known to the readers of Sydney Smith) had a habit of observing, upon occasion of anything utterly devoid of decent defence: "Well, well, this *is* a little too bad; we must apply our *majority* to this difficulty". The effect is very plain; while Mr. George Rose and his betters respected certain prejudices and opinions, then all but universal in

Parliament, they in all other matters might do precisely what they would; and in all out-of-the-way matter, in anything that Sir John could not understand, on a point of cotton-spinning or dissent, be as absolute as the Emperor Napoleon. But the case is (as we know by experience of what passes under our daily observation) immensely altered, when there is no longer this strong, compact, irrefragable "following," no distinctly divided, definite faction, no regular opposition to be daily beaten, no regular official party to be always victorious—but, instead, a mere aggregate of "independent members," each thinking for himself, propounding, as the case may be, his own sense or his own nonsense—one, profound ideas applicable to all time; another, something meritorious from the Eton Latin Grammar, and a mangled republication of the morning's newspaper; some exceedingly philosophical, others only crotchety, but, what is my point, each acting on his own head, assuming not Mr. Pitt's infallibility, but his own. Again, divide a political assembly into three parties, any two of which are greater than the third, and it will be always possible for an adroit and dexterous intriguer (M. Thiers has his type in most assemblies) to combine, three or four times a fortnight, the two opposition parties into a majority on some interesting question—on some matter of importance. The best government possible under the existing circumstances will be continually and, in a hazardous state of society, even desperately and fatally weakened. We have had in our sensible House of Commons—aye, and among the most stupid and sensible portion of it, the country gentlemen—within these few years a striking example of how far party zeal, the heat of disputation, and a strong desire for a deep revenge, will carry the best-intentioned politicians in destroying the executive efficiency of an obnoxious Government. I mean the division of the House of Commons on the Irish Army Bill.

which ended in the resignation of Sir Robert Peel. You remember on that occasion the country party, under the guidance of Lord G. Bentinck, in the teeth of the Irish policy which they had been advocating and supporting all their lives, and which they would advocate and support again now, in the teeth of their previous votes, and (I am not exaggerating the history) almost of their avowed present convictions, defeated a Government, not on a question of speculative policy or recondite importance, but upon the precautionary measures necessary (according to every idea that a Tory esquire is capable of entertaining) for preventing a rebellion, the occurrence of which they were told (and as the event proved, told truly) might be speedy, hourly, and immediate. Of course I am not giving any opinion of my own about the merits of the question. The Whigs may be right; it may be good to have shown the world how little terrible is the bluster of Irish agitation. But I cite the event as a striking example of an essential evil in a three-sided Parliamentary system, as practically showing that a generally well-meaning opposition will, in defiance of their own habitual principles, cripple an odious executive, even in a matter of street-rows and rebellions. I won't weary you with tediously pointing the moral. If such things are done in the green tree, what may be done in the dry? If party zeal and disputation excitement so hurry men away in our own grave business-like experienced country—what may we expect from a vain, a volatile, an ever-changing race?

Nor am I drawing a French Assembly from mere history, or from my own imagination. In the late Chamber, the great subject of the very last *Annual Register*, there are not only three parties but four. There was a perpetually shifting element of 200 members, calling itself the Mountain, which had in its hands the real casting vote between the

President's Government and the Constitutional opposition. In the very last days of the Constitution they voted against, and thereby negatived, the proposition of the questors for arming the Assembly; partly because they disliked General Changarnier, and detested General Cavaignac; partly because, being extreme Socialists, they would not arm anybody who was likely to use his arms against their friends on the barricades. The same party was preparing to vote for the Bill on the Responsibility of the President, actually, and according to the design of its promoters, in the nature of a bill of indictment against him, because they feared his rigour and efficiency in repressing the anticipated convulsion. The question, the critical question, *Who* shall prevent a new revolution? was thus actually, and owing to the lamentable divisions of the friends of order, in the hands of the Parliamentary representatives of the very men who wished to affect that revolution, was determined, I may say, ultimately and in the last resort by the party of disorder.

Nor on lesser questions was there any steady majority, any distinctive deciding faction, any administering phalanx, anybody regularly voting with anybody else, often enough, or in number enough, to make the legislative decision regular, consistent, or respectable. Their very debates were unseemly. On anything not pleasing to them, the Mountain, (as I said) a yellow and fanatical generation—had (I am told) an engaging knack of rising *en masse* and screaming until they were tired. It will be the same, I do not say in degree (for the Mountain would certainly lose several votes now, and the numbers of the late Chamber were unreasonably and injudiciously large), but, in a measure, you will be always subject to the same disorder—a fluctuating majority, and a minority, often a ruling minority, favourable to rebellion. The cause, as I believe, is to be sought in the peculiarities of the French character,

on which I dwelt, prolixly, I fear, and *ad nauseam*, in my last two letters. If you have to deal with a *mobile*, a clever, a versatile, an intellectual, a dogmatic nation, inevitably, and by necessary consequence, you will have conflicting systems—every man speaking his own words, and always giving his own suffrage to what seems good in his own eyes—many holding to-day what they will regret to-morrow—a crowd of crotchety theories and a heavy percentage of philosophical nonsense—a great opportunity for subtle stratagem and intriguing selfishness—a miserable division among the friends of tranquillity, and a great power thrown into the hands of those who, though often with the very best intentions, are practically, and in matter of fact, opposed both to society and civilisation. And, moreover, beside minor inconveniences and lesser hardships, you will indisputably have periodically—say three or four times in fifty years—a great crisis; the public mind much excited, the people in the streets swaying to and fro with the breath of every breeze, the discontented *ouvriers* meeting in a hundred knots, discussing their real sufferings and their imagined grievances, with lean features and angry gesticulations; the Parliament, all the while in permanence, very ably and eloquently expounding the whole subject, one man proposing this scheme, and another that; the Opposition expecting to oust the Ministers, and ride in on the popular commotion; the Ministers fearing to take the odium of severe or adequate repressive measures, lest they should lose their salary, their places and their majority: finally, a great crash, a disgusted people, overwhelmed by revolutionary violence, or seeking a precarious, a pernicious, but after all a precious protection from the bayonets of military despotism. Louis Philippe met these dangers and difficulties in a thoroughly characteristic manner. He bought his majority. Being a practical and not over sentimental public functionary,

he went into the market and purchased a sufficient number of constituencies and members. Of course the *convenances* were carefully preserved; grossness of any kind is too jarring for French susceptibility; the purchase money was not mere coin (which indeed the buyers had not to offer), but a more gentlemanly commodity—the patronage of the Government. The electoral colleges were extremely small, the number of public functionaries is enormous; so that a very respectable body of electors could always be expected to have, like a four-year-old barrister (since the County Courts), an immense prejudice for the existing Government. One man hoped to be *Maire*, another wanted his son got into St. Cyr or the Polytechnic School, and this could be got, and was daily got (I am writing what is hardly denied), by voting for the Government candidate. In a word, a sufficient proportion of the returns of the electoral colleges resembled the returns from Harwich or Devonport, only that the Government was the only bidder; for there are not, I fancy, in any country but England, people able and willing to spend, election after election, great sums of money for procuring the honour of a seat in a representative assembly. In fact, to copy the well-known phrase, just as in the time of Burke, certain gentlemen had the expressive nickname of the King's friends, so these constituencies may aptly be called the King's constituencies. Of course, on the face of it, this system worked, as far as business went, excellently well. For eighteen years the tranquillity was maintained. France, it may be, has never enjoyed so much calm civilisation, so much private happiness; and yet, after all such and so long blessings, it fell in a mere riot—it fell unregretted. It is a system which no wise man can wish to see restored; it was a system of regulated corruption.

But it does not at all follow, nor I am sure will you be apt so to deduce, that because I imagine that France is unfit

for a Government in which a House of Commons is, as with us, the sovereign power in the State, I therefore believe that it is fit for no freedom at all. Our own constitutional history is the completest answer to any such idea. For centuries, the House of Commons was habitually, we know, but a third-rate power in the State. First the Crown, then the House of Lords, enjoyed the ordinary and supreme dominion; and down almost to our own times the Crown and House of Lords, taken together, were much more than a sufficient match for the people's House; but yet we do not cease to proclaim, daily and hourly, in season and out of season, that the English people never have been slaves. It may, therefore, well be that our own country having been free under a Constitution in which the representative element was but third-rate in power and dignity, France and other nations may contrive to enjoy the advantage from institutions in which it is only second-rate.

Now, of this sort is the Constitution of Louis Napoleon. I am not going now, after prefacing so much, to discuss its details; indeed, I do not feel competent to do so. What should we say to a Frenchman's notion of a £5 householder, or the fourth and fifth clauses of the New Reform Bill? and I quite admit that a paper building of this sort can hardly be safely criticised till it is carried out on *terra firma*, till we see not only the theoretic ground-plan, but the actual inhabited structure. The life of a constitution is in the spirit and disposition of those who work it; and we can't yet say in the least what that, in this case, will be; but so far as the constitution shows its meaning on the face of it, it clearly belongs to the class which I have named. The *Corps Législatif* is not the administering body, it is not even what perhaps it might with advantage have been, a petitioning and remonstrating body; but it possesses the Legislative veto, and the power of stopping *en masse* the supplies. It

is not a working, a ruling, or an initiative, or supremely decisive, but an immense checking power. It will be unable to change Ministers, or aggravate the course of revolutions; but it could arrest an unpopular war—it could reject an unpopular law—it is, at least in theory, a powerful and important drag-chain. Out of the mouths of its adversaries this system possesses what I have proved, or conjectured, or assumed to be the prime want of the French nation—a strong executive. The objection to it is that the objectors find nothing else in it. We confess there is no doubt now of a power adequate to repress street-rows and revolutions.

At the same time, I guard myself against intimating any opinion on the particular minutiæ of this last effort of institutional invention. I do not know enough to form a judgment; I sedulously, at present, confine myself to this one remark, that the new Government of France belongs, in theory at least, to the right class of Constitutions—the class that is most exactly suited to French habits, French nature, French social advantages, French social dangers—the class I mean, in which the representative body has a consultative, a deliberative, a checking and a minatory—not as with us a supreme, nearly an omnipotent, and exclusively initiatory function.

I am, yours, etc.,

AMICUS.

P.S.—You may like five words on a French invasion. I can't myself imagine, and what is more to the point, I do not observe that anybody here has any notion of, any such inroad into England as was contemplated and proposed by General Changarnier. No one in the actual conduct of affairs, with actual responsibility for affairs, not, as the event proved, even Ledru Rollin, could, according to me, encounter the risk and odium of such a hateful and horribly

dangerous attempt. But, I regret to add, there is a contingency which sensible people here (so far as I have had the means of judging) do not seem to regard as at all beyond the limits of rational probability, by which a war between England and France would most likely be superinduced; that is, a French invasion of Belgium. I do not mean to assure you that this week or next the Prince-President will make a razzia in Brussels. But I do mean that it is thought not improbable that somehow or other, on some wolf-and-the-lamb pretext, he may pick a quarrel with King Leopold, and endeavour to restore to the French the "natural limit" of the Rhine. Now, I have never seen the terms of the guarantee which the shrewd and cautious Leopold exacted from England before he would take the throne of Belgium but as the only real risk was a French aggression upon this tempting territory, I do not make any doubt but that the expressions of that instrument bind us to go to war in defence of the country whose limits and independence we have guaranteed. And in this case, an invasion of England would be as admissible a military movement as an invasion of France. I hope, therefore, you will use your best rhetoric to induce people to put our pleasant country in a state of adequate and tolerable defence.

I see by the invaluable *Galignani*, that some excellent people at Manchester are indulging in a little arithmetic. "Suppose," say they, "all the French got safe, and each took away £50, now how much do you fancy it would come to (40,000 men by £50, nought's nought is nought, nought and carry two)—compared to the *existing* burden of the National Debt? Was there ever such amiable infatuation! It is not what the French could carry off, but what they would leave behind them, which is in the reasonable apprehension of reasonable persons. The funds at 50—broken

banks—the *Gazette* telling you who had *not* failed—Downing Street *vide* Wales—destitute families, dishonoured daughters, one-legged fathers—the mourning shops utterly sacked—the customers in tears—a pale widow in a green bonnet—the Exchange in ruins—five notches on St. Paul's—and a big hole in the Bank of England;—these, though but a few of the certain consequences of a French visit to London, are quite enough to terrify even an adamantine editor and a rather reckless correspondent.

Letter VI.

THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER PRESS.

Paris, 10*th Feb.*

Sir,—We learn from an Oriental narrative in considerable circulation, that the ancient Athenians were fond of news. Of course they were. It is in the nature of a mass of clever and intellectual people living together to want something to talk about. Old ideas—common ascertained truths—are good things enough to live by, but are very rare, and soon sufficiently discussed. Something else—true or false, rational or nonsensical—is quite essential; and, therefore, in the old literary world men gathered round the travelling sophist, to learn from him some thought, crotchet, or speculation. And what the vagabond speculators were once, that, pretty exactly, is the newspaper now. To it the people of this intellectual capital look for that daily mental bread, which is as essential to them as the less ethereal sustenance of ordinary mortals. With the spread of education this habit travels downward. Not the literary man only, but the *ouvrier* and the *bourgeois*, live on the same food. This day's *Siècle* is discussed not only in gorgeous drawing-

rooms, but in humble reading-rooms, and still humbler workshops. According to the printed notions of us journalists, this is a matter of pure rejoicing. The influence of the Press, if you believe writers and printers, is the one sufficient condition of social well-being. Yet there are many considerations which make very much against this idea: I can't go into several of them now, but those that I shall mention are suggested at once by matters before me. First, newspaper people are the only traders that thrive upon convulsion. In quiet times, who cares for the paper? In times of tumult, who does not? Commonly, the *Patrie* (the *Globe* of this country) sells, I think, for three sous: on the evening of the *coup d'état*, itinerant ladies were crying under my window, "*Demandez la* Patrie—*Journal du soir —trente sous—Journal du soir*"; and I remember witnessing, even in our sober London, in February, 1848, how bald fathers of families paid large sums, and encountered bare-headed the unknown inclemencies of the night air, that they might learn the last news of Louis Philippe, and, if possible, be in at the death of the revolutionary Parisians. "Happy," says the sage, "are the people whose annals are vacant;" but "woe! woe! woe!" he might add, "to the wretched journalists that have to compose and sell leading articles therein".

I am constrained to say that, even in England, this is not without its unfavourable influence on literary morals. Take in the *Times*, and you will see it assumed that every year ought to be an era. "The Government does nothing," is the indignant cry, and simple people in the country don't know that this is merely a civilised *façon de parler* for "I have nothing to say". Lord John Russell must alter the suffrage, that we may have something pleasant in our columns.

I am afraid matters are worse here. The leading French

journalist is, as you know, the celebrated Emile de Girardin, and, so far as I can learn anything about him, he is one of the most fickle politicians in existence. Since I have read the *Presse* regularly, it has veered from every point of the compass well-nigh to every other—now for, now against, the revision of the constitution—now lauding Louis Napoleon to the skies—now calling him plain M. Bonaparte, and insinuating that he had not two ideas, and was incapable of moral self-government—now connected with the Red party, now praising the majority ; but all and each of these veerings and shiftings determined by one most simple and certain principle—to keep up the popular excitement, to maintain the gifted M. de Girardin at the head of it. Now, a man who spends his life in stimulating excitement and convulsion is really a political incendiary ; and however innocent and laudable his brother exiles may be, the old editor and founder of the *Presse* is, as I believe, now only paying the legitimate penalty of systematic political *arson*.

When a foreigner—at least an Englishman—begins to read the French papers, his first idea is, "How well these fellows write ! Why, every one of them has a style, and a good style too. Really, how clear, how acute, how clever, how perspicuous ; I wish our journalists would learn to write like this ; " but a little experience will modify this idea—at least I have found it so. I read for a considerable time these witty periodicals with pleasure and admiration ; after a little while I felt somehow that I took them up with an effort, but I fancied, knowing my disposition, that this was laziness ; when on a sudden, in the waste of *Galignani*, I came across an article of the *Morning Herald*. Now you'll laugh at me, if I tell you it was a real enjoyment. There was no toil, no sharp theory, no pointed expression, no fatiguing brilliancy, in fact, what the man in Lord Byron desired, "no nothing,"[1]

[1] Letter to Murray, 4th June, 1817. (Forrest Morgan.)

but a dull, creeping, satisfactory sensation that now, at least, there was nothing to admire. As long walking in picture galleries makes you appreciate a mere wall, so I felt that I understood for the first time that really dulness had its interest. I found a pure refreshment in coming across what possibly might be latent sense, but was certainly superficial stupidity.

I think there is nothing we English hate like a clever but prolonged controversy. Now this is the life and soul of the Parisian press. Everybody writes against everybody. It is not mere sly hate or solemn invective, nothing like what we occasionally indulge in, about the misdemeanours of a morning contemporary. But they take the other side's article piece by piece, and comment on him, and, as they say in libel cases, *innuendo* him, and satisfactorily show that, according to his arithmetic, two and two make five ; useful knowledge that. It is really good for us to know that some fellow (you never heard of him) it rather seems can't add up. But it interests people here ;—*c'est logique*, they tell you ; and if you are trustful enough to answer "*Mon Dieu*, *c'est ennuyeux*, *je n'en sais rien*," they look as if you sneered at the Parthenon.

It is out of these controversies that M. de Girardin has attained his power and his fame. His articles (according to me, at least) have no facts and no sense. He gives one all pure reasoning—little scrappy syllogisms ; as some one said most unjustly of old Hazlitt, he "writes pimples". But let an unfortunate writer in the *Assemblée Nationale*, or anywhere else, make a little refreshing blunder in his logic, and next morning small punning sentences (one to each paragraph like an equation) come rattling down on him : it is clear as noonday that somebody said "something followed," and it does *not* follow, and it is so agreed in all the million *cabinets de lecture* after due gesticulation ; and, moreover, that M. de

Girardin is the man to expose it, and what clever fellows they are to appreciate him; but what the truth is, who cares? The subject is forgotten.

Now all this, to my notion, does great harm. Nothing destroys commonplace like the habit of arguing for arguing's sake; nothing is so bad for public matters as that they should be treated, not as the data for the careful formation of a sound judgment, but as a topic or background for displaying the shining qualities of public writers. It is no light thing this. M. de Girardin for many years has gained more power, more reputation, more money than any of his rivals; not because he shows more knowledge—he shows much less; not because he has a wiser judgment—he has no fixed judgment at all; but because he has a more pointed, sharp way of exposing blunders, intrinsically paltry, obvious to all educated men; and does not care enough for any subject to be diverted from this logical trifling by a serious desire to convince anybody of anything.

Don't think I wish to be hard on this accomplished gentleman. I am not going to require of hack-writers to write only on what they understand—if that were the law, what a life for the sub-editor; I should not be writing these letters, and how seldom and how timidly would the morning journals creep into the world. Nor do I expect, though I may still, in sentimental moods, desire, middle-aged journalists to be buoyed up by chimerical visions of improving mankind.

You know what our eminent *chef* (by Thackeray profanely called Jupiter Jeames) has been heard to say over his gin and water, in an easy and voluptuous moment: "Enlightenment be ——, I want the fat fool of a thick-headed reader to say, 'Just *my own* views,' else he ain't pleased, and may be he stops the paper". I am not going to require supernatural excellence from writers. Yet there are limits. If I were a

chemist, I should not mind, I suppose, selling now and then, a deleterious drug on a due affidavit of rats, then and there filed before me ; yet I don't feel as if I could live comfortably on the sale of mere arsenic. I fancy I should like to sell something wholesome occasionally. So, though one might, upon occasion, egg on a riot, or excite to a breach of the peace, I should not like to be every day feeding on revolutionary excitement. Nor should I like to be exclusively selling diminutive, acute, quibbling leaders (what they call in the Temple special demurrers), certain to occupy people with small fallacies, and lead away their minds from the great questions actually at issue.

Sometimes I might like to feel as if I understood what I wrote on, but of course with me this indulgence must be very rare. You know in France journalism is not only an occupation, it is a career. As in far-off Newcastle a coal-fitter's son looks wistfully to the bar, in the notion that he too may emulate the fame and fortune of Lord Eldon or Lord Stowell, so in fair Provence, a pale young aspirant packs up his little bundle in the hope of rivalling the luck and fame of M. Thiers ; he comes to Paris—he begins, like the great historian, by dining for thirty sous in the Palais Royal, in the hope that after long years of labour and jealousy he, too, may end by sleeping amid curtains of white muslin lined with pink damask. Just consider for a moment what a difference this one fact shows between France and England. Here a man who begins life by writing in the newspapers, has an appreciable chance of arriving to be Minister of Foreign Affairs. The class of public writers is the class from which the equivalent of Lord Aberdeen, Lord Palmerston, or Lord Granville will most likely be chosen. Well, well, under that *régime* you and I might have been important people ; we might have handled a red box, we might have known what it was to have a reception, to dine with the

Queen, to be respectfully mystified by the *corps diplomatique.* But angry Jove forbade—of course we can hardly deny that he was wrong—and yet if the revolutions of 1848 have clearly brought out any fact, it is the utter failure of newspaper statesmen. Everywhere they have been tried: everywhere they have shown great talents for intrigue, eloquence, and agitation—how rarely have they shown even fair aptitude for ordinary administration; how frequently have they gained a disreputable renown by a laxity of principle surpassing the laxity of their aristocratic and courtly adversaries! Such being my imperfect account of my imperfect notions of the French press, I can't altogether sympathise in the extreme despondency of many excellent persons at its temporary silence since the *coup d'état.* I might even rejoice at it, if I thought that the Parisian public could in any manner be broken of their dependence on the morning's article. But I have no such hope; the taste has got down too deep into the habits of the people; some new thing will still be necessary; and every Government will find some of its most formidable difficulties in their taste for political disputation and controversial excitement. The ban must sooner or later be taken off; the President sooner or later must submit to censure and ridicule, and whatever laws he may propose about the press, there is none which scores of ingenious men—now animated by the keenest hatred, will not try every hazard to evade. What he may do to avoid this is as yet unknown. One thing, however, I suppose is pretty sure, and I fancy quite wise. The press will be restrained from discussing the principles of the Government. Socialists will not be allowed to advocate a Democratic Republic. Legitimists will not be allowed to advocate the cause of Henri Cinq, nor Orleanists the cause of the Comte de Paris. Such indulgence might be tolerable in more temperate countries, but experience shows that it is not safe now and here.

A really sensible press, arguing temperately after a clear and satisfactory exposition of the facts, is a great blessing in any country. It will be still more a blessing in a country where, as I tried to explain formerly, the representative element must play (if the public security is to be maintained) a rather secondary part. It would then be a real stimulus to deliberate inquiry and rational judgment upon public affairs; to the formation of common-sense views upon the great outlines of public business; to the cultivation of sound moral opinions and convictions on the internal and international duties of the State. Even the actual press which we may expect to see here, may not be pernicious. It will doubtless stimulate to many factious proceedings, and many interruptions of the public prosperity; it may very likely conduce to drive the President (contrary, if not to his inclination, at least to his personal interest) into foreign hostilities and international aggression; but it may be, notwithstanding, useful in preventing private tyranny, in exposing wanton oppression, in checking long-suffering revenge; it may prevent acts of spoliation like what they call here *le premier vol de l'aigel* —the seizure of the Orleans property;—in a word, being certain to oppose the executive, where the latter is unjust its enemy will be just.

I had hopes that this letter would be the last with which I should tease you; but I find I must ask you to be so kind as to find room for one, and only for one more.

I am, yours, etc.,

AMICUS.

LETTER VII.

CONCLUDING LETTER.

PARIS, 19*th Feb.*, 1852.

SIR,—There is a story of some Swedish Abbé, in the last century, who wrote an elaborate work to prove the then

constitution of his country to be immortal and indestructible. While he was correcting the proof sheets, a friend brought him word that—behold! the King had already destroyed the said polity. "Sir," replied the gratified author, "our Sovereign, the illustrious Gustavus, may certainly overthrow the Constitution, but never *my book*." I beg to parody this sensible remark; for I wish to observe to you, that even though Louis Napoleon should turn out a bad and mischievous ruler, he won't in the least refute these letters.

What I mean is as follows. Above all things, I have designed to prove to you that the French are by character unfit for a solely and predominantly Parliamentary government; that so many and so great elements of convulsion exist here, that it will be clearly necessary that a strong, vigorous, anti-barricade executive should, at whatever risk and cost, be established and maintained; that such an Assembly as the last is irreconcilable with this; in a word, that riots and revolutions must, if possible, come to an end, and only such a degree of liberty and democracy be granted to the French nation, as is consistent with the consolidated existence of the order and tranquillity which are equally essential to rational freedom and civilised society.

In order to combine the maintenance of order and tranquillity with the maximum of possible liberty, I hope that it may in the end be found possible to admit into a political system a representative and sufficiently democratic Assembly, without that Assembly assuming and arrogating to itself those nearly omnipotent powers, which in our country it properly and rightfully possesses, but which in the history of the last sixty years, we have, as it seems to me, so many and so cogent illustrations that a French Chamber is, by genius and constitution, radically incapable to hold and exercise. I hope that some checking, consultative, petitioning Assembly—some *βουλή*, in the real sense of the term—

some *Council*, some provision by which all grave and deliberate public opinion (I do not speak more definitely, because an elaborate Constitution, from a foreigner, must be an absurdity) may organise and express itself—yet at the same time, without utterly hampering and directing—and directing amiss—those more simple elements of national polity on which we must, after all, rely for the prompt and steady repression of barricade-making and bloodshed.

I earnestly desire to believe that some such system as this may be found in practice possible; for otherwise, unless I quite misread history, and altogether mistake what is under my eyes, after many more calamities, many more changes, many more great Assemblies abounding in Vergniauds and Berryers, the essential deficiencies of debating Girondin statesmen will become manifest, the uncompact, unpractical, over-volatile, over-logical, indecisive, ineffectual rule of Gallican Parliaments will be unequivocally manifest (it is *now* plain, I imagine, but a truth so humiliating must be written large in letters of blood before those that run will read it), and no medium being held or conceived to be possible, the nation will sink back, not contented but discontented, not trustfully but distrustfully, under the rule of a military despot; and if they yield to this, it will be from no faith, no loyalty, no credulity; it will be from a sense—a hated sense—of unqualified failure, a miserable scepticism in the probable success and the possible advantages of long-tried and ill-tried rebellion.

Now, whether the Constitution of Louis Napoleon is calculated to realise this ideal and intermediate system, is, till we see it at work, doubtful and disputable. It is not the question so much of what it may be at this moment, as of what it may become in a brief period, when things have begun to assume a more normal state, and the public mind shall be relaxed from its present and painful tension. How-

ever, I should be deceiving you, if I did not inform you that the state of men's minds towards the Prince-President is not, so far as I can make it out, what it was the day after the *coup d'état*. The measures taken against the Socialists are felt to have been several degrees too severe; the list of exiles too numerous; the confiscation of the Orleans' property could not but be attended with the worst effect; the law announced by the Government organs respecting or rather against the Press, is justly (though you know from my last letter I have no partiality for French newspapers) considered to be absurdly severe, and likely to countenance much tyranny and gross injustice; above all, instead of maintaining mere calm and order, the excessive rigour, and sometimes the injustice, of the President's measures, have produced a breathless pause (if I may so speak) in public opinion; political conversation is a whispered question, what will he do next? Firstly, the Government is dull, and the French want to be amused; secondly, it is going to spoil the journals (depreciate newspapers to a Frenchman, disparage nuts to a monkey); thirdly, it is producing (I do not say it has yet produced, but it has made a beginning in producing) a habit of apprehension;—in fact, I believe the French opinion of the Prince-President is near about that of the interesting damsel in George Sand's comedy, concerning her uninteresting *pretendu*: "*Vous l'aimez? n'est-ce pas?*" "*Oui, oui, oui, certainement je l'aime. Oui, oui, mille fois, oui. Je dis que oui. Je vous assure.* Au moins *je fais mon possible à l'aimer:*" the first attachment is not extinct, but people have begun—awful symptom—to add the withering and final saving clause. Yet it is, I imagine, a great mistake to suppose that the present Constitution, if it work at all, will permanently work as a despotism, or that the *Corps Législatif* will be without a measure of popular influence; the much more helpless *Tribunal* was not so in the much

more troublesome times of the Consulate. And the source of such influence and the manner of its operation may be, I imagine, well enough traced in the nature of the forces whereby Louis Napoleon holds his power.

A truly estimable writer says, I know, "that the Legislative body cannot have, by possibility, any analogy with the consultative and petitioning senate of the Plantagenets," nor can any one deny that the likeness is extremely faint (no illustration ever yet ran on all fours), the practical differences clear and convincing. But yet, according to the light which is given me now, I affirm that for one vital purpose—the resisting and criticising any highly unpopular acts of a highly unpopular Government—the *Corps Législatif* of Louis Napoleon must, and will, inevitably possess a power compared with which the forty-day followers of the feudal *noblesse* seem as impotent as a congregation of Quakers; a force the peculiarity of which is that you can't imprison, can't dissolve, can't annihilate it—I mean, of course, the moral power of civilised opinion. You may put down newspapers, dissolve Parliaments, imprison agitators, almost stop conversation, but you can't stop thought. You can't prevent the silent, slow, creeping, stealthy progress of hatred, and scorn, and shame. You can't attenuate easily the stern justice of a retarded retaliation. These influences affect the great reservoir of physical force—they act on the army. A body of men enlisted daily from the people take to the barracks the notions of the people; in spite of new associations, the first impressions are apt to be retained; you overlay them, but they remain. What is believed elsewhere and out of doors gives them weight. Each soldier has relations, friends, a family—he knows what they think. Much more with the officers. These are men moving in Parisian society accessible to its influences, responsible to its opinion, apt to imbibe its sentiments. Certainly *esprit de corps*—the habit

of obedience, the instinct of discipline, are strong, and will carry men far; but certainly, also, they have natural limits. Men won't stand being cut, being ridiculed, being detested, being despised, daily and for ever, and that for measures which their own understandings disapprove of. Remember there is not here any question of barbarous bands overawing a civilised and imperial city; no question of ugly Croats keeping down cultivated Italians; it is but a question of French gentlemen and French peasantry in uniform acting in opposition to other French gentlemen and other French peasants without uniform. Already there has been talk (I do not say well-founded, but still the matter was named) of breaking two or three hundred officers, for speaking against the Orleans decrees. Do you fancy that can be done every day? Do you imagine that a Parliament, whatever its nominal functions may be (remember those of the old *régime*), speaking the sense of the people about the question of the day, in a time of convulsion, and in a critical hour, would not be attended to, or at any rate thought of and considered, by an army taken from the people—commanded by men selected from and every day mixing with common society and very ordinary mankind? The 2nd of December showed how readily such troops will support a decided and popular President against an intriguing, divided, impotent Chamber. But such hard blows won't bear repetition. Soldiers—French soldiers, I take it especially, from their quickness and intelligence, are neither deaf nor blind. If there be truth in history or speculation, national forces can't long be used against the nation: they are unmerciful, and often cruel to feeble minorities; they are ready now for a terrible onslaught on mere Socialists, just as of old they turned out cheerfully for awful dragonnades on the ill-starred Protestants; but once let them know and feel that everybody is against them—that they are alone, that their acts

are contemned and their persons despised—and gradually, or all at once, discipline and habit surely fail, men murmur or desert, officers hesitate or disobey, one regiment is dismissed to the Cabyles, another relegated to rural solitudes; at last, most likely in the decisive moment of the whole history, the rulers, who relied only on their troops, are afraid to call them out; they hesitate, send spies and commissioners to inquire. "*Vive le Gouvernement Provisoire!*"—the black and roaring multitude rises and comes on; but two seconds, and the obnoxious institutions are lost in the flood; nothing is heard but the cry of the hour, sounding shrill and angry over the waste of Revolution—"*Vive le Diable!*" With such a force behind them, a French Parliament, of whatever nature, with whatever written duties, is, if at the head of the movement, in the critical hour, apt to be stronger than the strongest of the Barons.

Nor do I concur with those who censure the President for "recommending" avowedly the candidates he approves. It is a part of the great question, How is universal suffrage to be worked successfully in such a country as France? The peasant proprietors have but one political idea, that they wish the Prince to govern them;—they wish to vote for the candidate most acceptable to him, and they wish nothing else. Why is he wrong in telling them which candidate that is?

Still, no doubt, the reins are now strained a great deal too tight. It is possible, quite possible, that a majority in this Parliament may be packed, but what I would impress on you is that it can't always be packed. Sooner or later constituencies who wish to oppose the Government will, in spite of *maires* and *préfets*, elect the opposition candidate: it is in the nature of any, even the least vigorous system of popular election, to struggle forwards and progressively

attain to some fair and reasonable correspondence with the substantial views and opinions of the constituent people.

I therefore fall back on what I told you before—my essential view or crotchet about the mental aptitudes and deficiencies of the French people. The French, said Napoleon, are *des machines nerveuses*.

The point is, can their excitable, volatile, superficial, over-logical, uncompromising character be managed and manipulated as to fit them for entering on a practically uncontrolled system of Parliamentary Government? Will not any large and omnipotent Assembly resemble the stormy Constituent and the late Chamber, rather than the business-like, formal, ennui-diffusing Parliament to which in our free and dull country we are felicitously accustomed? Can one be so improved as to keep down a riot? I foresee a single and but a single objection. I fancy, indeed I know, that there is a school of political thinkers not yet in possession of any great influence, but, perhaps, a little on the way thereto, which has improved or invented a capital panacea, whereby all nations are, within very moderate limits of time, to be surely and certainly fitted for political freedom; and that no matter how formed—how seemingly stable—how long ago cast and constructed, be the type of popular character to which the said remedy is sought to be applied. This panacea is the foundation or restoration of provincial municipalities. Now, I am myself prepared to go a considerable length with the school in question. I do myself think, that a due and regular consideration of the knotty points of paving and lighting, and the deciding in the last resort upon them, is a valuable discipline of national character. It exercises people's minds on points they know, in things of which there is a test. Very few people are good judges of a good Constitution; but everybody's eyes are excellent judges of good light; every man's feet are

profound in the theory of agreeable stones. Yet I can't altogether admit, nevertheless, that municipalities are the sufficient and sole, though they may be very likely an essential, pre-requisite of political freedom. There is the great instance of Hindostan to the contrary. The whole old and national system of that remarkable country—a system in all probability as ancient as the era of Alexander, is a village system; and one so curious, elaborate, I fancy I might say so profound, that the best European observers —Sir Thomas Munro, and that sort of people—are most strenuous for its being retained unimpaired. According to them, the village hardly heard of the Imperial Government, except for the purpose of Imperial taxation. The business of life through that whole vast territory has always been practically determined by potails[1] and parish-vestries, and yet nevertheless and in spite of this capital and immemorial municipal system, our subjects, the Hindoos, are still slaves and still likely to be slaves; still essentially slavish, and likely, I much fear, very long indeed to remain so. It is therefore quite certain that rural and provincial institutions won't so alter and adapt all national characters, as to fit all nations for a Parliamentary Constitution; consequently, the *onus probandi* is on those who assert that it will so alter and mould the French. Again, I assure you that the French do think of paving and lighting; not enough, perhaps, but still they have begun. The country is, as you know, divided into departments, arrondissements, and communes; in each of these there is a council, variously elected, but, in all cases, popularly and from the district, which has the sole control over the expenditure of the particular locality for every special and local purpose, and which, if I am rightly informed, has, in theory, at least, the sole initiative in every

[1] A Madras word which means a kind of village mayor.

local improvement. The defect, I fancy, is that in the exercise of these, considerable bodies are hampered and controlled by the veto and supervision of the central authority. The rural councils discuss and decide what in their judgment should be then done and what money should be so spent; the better sort of the agricultural population have much more voice in the latter than have the corresponding class in England, in the determination and imposition of our own county rate; but it is the central authority which decides whether such proposals and recommendations shall in fact be carried out. In a word, the provinces have to *ask leave* of the Parisian Ministry of the Interior. Now I admit this is an abuse. I should maintain that elderly gentlemen with bald heads and local influence ought to feel that they, in the final resort, settle and determine all truly local matters. Human nature likes its own road, its own bridge, its own lapidary obstacles, its own deceptive luminosity. But I ask again, can you fancy that these luxuries, to whatever degree indulged in, alter and modifiy in any essential particular, the levity and volatility of the French character? How much light to how much logic? How many paving stones to how much mobility? I can't foresee any such change. And even if so, what in the meantime?

We are left then, I think, to deal with the French character pretty much as we find it. What stealthy, secret, unknown, excellent forces may, in the wisdom of Providence, be even now modifying this most curious intellectual fabric, neither you nor I can know or tell. Let us hope that they may be many. But if we indulge, and from the immense records of revolutionary history, I think, with due distrust, we may legitimately and even beneficially indulge, in system-building and speculation, we must take the *data* which we have, and not those which we desire or imagine. Louis

Napoleon has proposed a system: English writers by the thousand (if I was in harness instead of holiday-making I should be most likely among them) proclaim his system an evil one. What then? Do you know what Father Newman says to the religious reformers, rather sharply, but still well: "Make out first of all where you stand—draw up your creed —write down your catechism". So I answer to the English eloquence: "State first of all what you would have—draw up your novel system for the French Government—write down your political Constitution". Don't criticise but produce; do not find fault but propose—and when you have proposed upon theory and have created upon paper, let us see whether the system be such a one as will work, in fact, and be accepted by a wilful nation in reality—otherwise your work is nought.

And mind, too, that the system to be sketched out must be fit to protect the hearths and homes of men. It is easy to compose polities if you do but neglect this one essential condition. Four years ago, Europe was in a ferment with the newest ideas, the best theories, the most elaborate, the most artistic Constitutions. There was the labour, and toil, and trouble of a million intellects, as good, taken on the whole, perhaps, as the world is likely to see,—of old statesmen, and literary gentlemen, and youthful enthusiasts, all over Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, from the frontiers of Russia to the Atlantic Ocean. Well, what have we gained? A Parliament in Sardinia! Surely this is a lesson against proposing politics which won't work, convening assemblies that can't legislate, constructing executives that aren't able to keep the peace, founding Constitutions inaugurated with tears and eloquence, soon abandoned with tears and shame; beginning a course of fair auguries and liberal hopes, but one from whose real dangers and actual sufferings a frightened and terrified people, in the

end, flee for a temporary, or may be a permanent, refuge under a military and absolute ruler.

Mazzini sneers at the selfishness of shopkeepers—I am for the shopkeepers against him. There are people who think because they are Republican there shall be no more "cakes and ale". Aye, verily, but there will though; or else stiffish ginger will be hot in the mouth. Legislative Assemblies, leading articles, essay eloquence — such are good—very good,—useful—very useful. Yet they can be done without. We can want them. Not so with all things. The selling of figs, the cobbling of shoes, the manufacturing of nails,—these are the essence of life. And let whoso frameth a Constitution of his country think on these things.

I conclude, as I ought, with my best thanks for the insertion of these letters; otherwise I was so full of the subject that I might have committed what Disraeli calls "the extreme act of human fatuity," I might have published a pamphlet: from this your kindness has preserved me, and I am proportionally grateful.

I am, yours,

AMICUS.

CÆSARISM AS IT EXISTED IN 1865.

[Lest the preceding letters should be supposed to express Mr. Bagehot's complete and final judgment on the character of the imperial *régime* of Louis Napoleon, it has been thought well to publish a paper which he contributed to the *Economist* after a visit to France in 1865, of a nature to correct the misapprehensions to which the somewhat youthful essays which precede might give rise. It appeared soon after the publication of the Emperor's Life of Julius Cæsar.]

That the French Emperor should have spare leisure and unoccupied reflection to write a biography, is astonishing, but if he wished to write a biography, his choice of a subject is very natural. Julius Cæsar was the first who tried on an imperial scale the characteristic principles of the French Empire,—as the first Napoleon revived them, as the third Napoleon has consolidated them. The notion of a demagogue ruler, both of a fighting demagogue and a talking demagogue, was indeed familiar to the Greek Republics; but their size was small, and their history unemphatic. On the big page of universal history, Julius Cæsar is the first instance of a democratic despot. He overthrew an aristocracy—a corrupt, and perhaps effete aristocracy, it is true, but still an aristocracy—by the help of the people, of the unorganised people. He said to the numerical majority of Roman citizens: "I am your advocate and your leader: make me supreme, and I will govern for your good, and in your name". This is exactly the principle of the French Empire. No one will ever make an approach to understanding it, who does not separate it altogether, and on principle, from the despotisms of feudal

origin and legitimate pretensions. The old Monarchies claim the obedience of the people upon grounds of duty. They say they have consecrated claims to the loyalty of mankind. They appeal to conscience, even to religion. But Louis Napoleon is a Benthamite despot. He is for the "greatest happiness of the greatest number". He says: "I am where I am, because I know better than any one else what is good for the French people, and they know that I know better". He is not the Lord's anointed; he is the people's agent.

We cannot here discuss what the effect of this system was in ancient times. These columns are not the best place for a historial dissertation; but we may set down very briefly the results of some close and recent observation of the system as it now exists, as it is at work in France, Part of its effects are well understood in England, but a part of them are, we think, but mistily seen and imperfectly apprehended.

In the first place, the French Empire is really the *best finished* democracy which the world has ever seen. What the many at the moment desire is embodied with a readiness, and efficiency, and a completeness which has no parallel, either in past history or present experience. An absolute Government with a popular instinct has the unimpeded command of a people renowned for orderly dexterity. A Frenchman will have arranged an administrative organisation really and effectually, while an Englishman is still bungling and a German still reflecting. An American is certainly as rapid, and in some measure as efficient, but his speed is a little headlong, and his execution is very rough; he tumbles through much, but he only tumbles. A Frenchman will not hurry; he has a deliberate perfection in detail, which may always be relied on, for it is never delayed. The French Emperor knows well how to use these powers.

His bureaucracy is not only endurable, but pleasant. An idle man who wants his politics done for him, has them done for him. The welfare of the masses—the present good of the present multitude—is felt to be the object of the Government and the law of the polity. The Empire gives to the French the full gratification of their main wishes, and the almost artistic culture of an admirable workmanship, of an administration finished as only Frenchmen can finish it, and as it never was finished before.

It belongs to such a Government to care much for material prosperity, and it does care. It makes the people as comfortable as they will permit. If they are not more comfortable, it is their own fault. The Government would give them free-trade, and consequent diffused comfort, if it could. No former French Government has done as much for free-trade as this Government. No Government has striven to promote railways, and roads, and industry, like this Government. France is much changed in twelve years. Not exactly by the mere merit of the Empire, for it entered into a great inheritance; it succeeded to the silent work of the free monarchy which revolution had destroyed and impeded. There were fruitful and vigorous germs of improvement ready to be elicited—ready to start forth—but under an unintelligent Government they would not have started forth; they would have lain idle and dead, but under the adroit culture of the present Government, they have grown so as to amaze Europe and France itself.

If, indeed, as is often laid down, the *present happiness* of the greatest number was the characteristic object of the Government, it would be difficult to make out that any probable French Government would be better, or indeed nearly so good, as the present. The intelligence of the Emperor on economical subjects—on the bread and meat of the people—is really better than that of the classes opposed

to him. He gives the present race of Frenchmen more that is good than any one else would give them, and he gives it them in their own name. They have as much as they like of all that is good for them. But if, not the present happiness of the greatest number, but *their future elevation*, be, as it is, the true aim and end of Government, our estimate of the Empire will be strangely altered. It is an admirable Government for present and coarse purposes, but a detestable Government for future and refined purposes.

In the first place, it stops the *teaching apparatus;* it stops the effectual inculcation of important thought upon the mass of mankind. All other mental effort but this, the Empire not only permits but encourages. The high intellect of Paris is as active, as well represented, as that of London, and it is even more keen. Intellect still gives there, and has always given, a distinctive position. To be a *Membre de l'Institut* is a recognised place in France; but in London, it is an ambiguous distinction to be a "clever fellow". The higher kinds of thought are better discussed in Parisian society than in London society, and better argued in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* than in any English periodical. The speculative thought of France has not been killed by the Empire; it is as quick, as rigorous, as keen as ever. But though still alive, it is no longer powerful; it cannot teach the mass. The *Revue* is permitted, but newspapers—effectual newspapers—are forbidden. A real course of free lectures on popular subjects would be impossible in Paris. *Agitation* is forbidden, and it is agitation, and agitation alone, which teaches. The crude mass of men bear easily philosophical treatises, refined articles, elegant literature; there are but two instruments penetrative enough to reach their opaque minds—the newspaper article and the popular speech, and both of these are forbidden.

In London the reverse is true. We may say that only

the loudest sort of expression is permitted to attain its due effect. The popular organs of literature so fill men's minds with incomplete thoughts, that deliberate treatment, that careful inquiry, that quiet thought, have no hearing. People are so deafened with the loud reiteration of many half-truths, that they have neither curiosity nor energy for elaborate investigation. The very word "elaborate" is become a reproach: elaboration produces something which the mass of men do not like, because it is above them,—which is tiresome, because it needs industry,—difficult, because it wants attention,—complicated, because it is true. On the whole, perhaps, English thought has rarely been so unfinished, so piecemeal, so *ragged* as it is now. We have so many little discussions, that we get no full discussion; we eat so many sandwiches, that we spoil our dinner. And on the Continent, accordingly, the speculative thought of England is despised. It is believed to be meagre, uncultivated, and immature. We have only a single compensation. Our thought may be poor and rough and fragmentary, but it is effectual. With our newspapers and our speeches—with our clamorous multitudes of indifferent tongues—we beat the ideas of the few into the minds of the many. The head of France is a better head than ours, but it does not move her limbs. The head of England is in comparison a coarse and crude thing, but rules her various frame and regulates her whole life.

France, *as it is*, may be happier because of the Empire, but France *in the future* will be more ignorant because of the Empire. The daily play of the higher mind upon the lower mind is arrested. The present Government has given an instalment of free-trade, but it could not endure an agitation for free-trade. A democratic despotism is like a theocracy; it assumes its own correctness. It says: "If am the representative of the people; I am here because I know

what they wish, because I know what they should have". As Cavaignac once said: "A Government which permits its principles to be questioned is a lost Government". All popular discussion whatever which aspires to *teach* the Government is radically at issue with the hypothesis of the Empire. It says that the Cæsar, the omniscient representative, is a mistaken representative, that he is not fit to be Cæsar.

The deterioration of the future is one inseparable defect of the imperial organisation, but it is not the only one,—for the moment, it is not the greatest. The greatest is the corruption of the present. A greater burden is imposed by it upon human nature than human nature will bear. Everything requires the support, aid, countenance of the central Government, and yet that Government is expected to keep itself pure. Concessions of railways concessions of the privilege of limited liability,—on a hundred subjects, legal permission, administrative help, are necessary to money-making. You concentrate upon a small body of leading official men the power of making men's fortunes, and it is simple to believe they will not make their own fortunes. The very principle of the system is to concentrate power, and power is money. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, "No honest man could be a 'Minister'"; and in France the temptations would conquer all men's honesty. The system requires angels to work it, and perhaps it has not been so fortunate as to find angels. The nod of a minister on the Bourse is a fortune, and somehow or other ministers make fortunes. The Bourse of Paris is still so small, that a leading capitalist may produce a great impression on it, and a leading capitalist working with a great minister, a vast impression. Accordingly, all that goes with sudden wealth; all that follows from the misuse of the two temptations of civilisation, money and women, is con-

centrated round the Imperial court. The Emperor would cure much of it if he could, but what can he do? They say he has said that he will not change his men. He will not substitute fleas that are hungry for fleas which at least are partially satisfied. He is right. The defect belongs to the system, not to these men; an enormous concentration of power in an industrial system ensures an accumulation of pecuniary temptation.

These are the two main disadvantages which France suffers from her present Government; the greater part of the price which she has to pay for her present happiness. She endures the daily presence of an efficient immorality; she sacrifices the educating apparatus which would elevate Frenchmen yet to be born. But these two disadvantages are not the only ones.

France gains the material present, but she does not gain the material future. All that secures present industry, her Government confers; in whatever needs confidence in the future she is powerless. *Credit* in France, to an Englishman's eye, has almost to be created. The *country* deposits in the Bank of France are only £1,000,000 sterling; that bank has fifty-nine branches, is immeasurably the greatest country bank in France. All discussions on the currency come back to the *cours forcé*, to the inevitable necessity of making inconvertible notes an irrefusable tender during a revolution. If you propose the simplest operations of credit to a French banker, he says: "You do not remember 1848; I do". And what is the answer? The present Government avowedly depends on, is ostentatiously concentrated in, the existing Cæsar. Its existence depends on the permanent occupation of the Tuileries by an extraordinary man. The democratic despot—the representative despot—must have the sagacity to divine the people's will and the sagacity to execute it. What is the likelihood that

these will be hereditary? Can they be expected in the next heirs—a child for Emperor, and a woman for Regent? The present happiness of France is happiness on a short life-lease; it may end with the life of a man who is not young, who has not spared himself, who has always thought, who has always *lived*.

Such are the characteristics of the Empire as it is. Such is the nature of Cæsar's Government as we know it at the present. We scarcely expect that even the singular ability of Napoleon III. will be able to modify, by a historical retrospect, the painful impressions left by actual contact with a living reality.[1]

[1] [As a curious illustration of Mr. Bagehot's estimate of the character of the third Empire, I may mention that all the earlier part of this paper, all that which dwelt on the good side of the imperial *régime* in relation to matters of material prosperity, was reproduced in the French official journals, while all the equally true and even more useful criticism on its moral deficiencies, was carefully omitted.—EDITOR.]

OXFORD.[1]

. . . . . .

If the Report of the Commission justifies the Commission, the evidence taken before the Commissioners in some sense justifies the University: Oxford is a fascinating city. Here are a very considerable number of gentlemen, all of them Reformers—some of them opposed in spirit to the characteristic theories of the Universities—none of them in the least representing the school with whom it is connected in the popular imagination—all of them abounding in attainments, many of them able—some with a large knowledge of the world—and they are all of them fond of the place. They all look back to their residence there with an evident and singular fondness. They all feel too, that the effect of the system on their minds has been strong; they are conscious that they are materially different from what they would have been if they had not been educated at all, or been educated elsewhere, and not any one hints that the training of Oxford has not been in his own case beneficial. Not one can suggest even an alteration without evident and heartfelt remonstrances. To alter Oxford is to alter their own youth. A place of education so winning and so effective may have many failings, but it must have great merits. We hope to show that, though we wish much change, we can at any rate in some degree, though no doubt incompletely, ap-

[1] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State, Discipline, and Studies of the University of Oxford, together with the Evidence, and an Appendix.* London, 1852.

preciate a few of the qualities that have gained the affections and obtained the gratitude of so many superior minds.

Very odd, indeed, at first sight, is the received English theory, that as places of education Oxford and Cambridge are both perfection. The schemes of tuition seem so different. Cambridge teaches her students the discoveries of Cambridge men; she occupies them with great P and little q, with Airey's tracts, perplexing dynamics, the last reaching of the Newtonian deduction, the best results of the best teaching of Francis Bacon.

Oxford, on the other hand, disdains every approach to novelty. Till the time when, thirty years ago, the much-reviled Dr. Hampden introduced an academical examination in the writings of Bishop Butler, not one of her most influential pursuits owed anything whatever to her own students: she taught exclusively from authors who were already very old when she was herself young; according to the admission tacitly suggested by the course of her tuition —she had not herself, any more than the rest of the modern world, contributed any considerable element to human knowledge, that it was desirable to introduce into common education. Surely these diverse systems, one thinks at first sight, cannot both be right; if Cambridge is right in receiving the modern learning, then it should seem that Oxford is wrong in rejecting it; if Oxford rightly rejects it, then Cambridge is unwise in accepting and inculcating it. Is this true? We regret that we cannot answer the question save by a tedious disquisition, bare controversy, and mere principle.

Ποι και ποθεν; what is a University for? unless we know with some accuracy that which we wish to have done, we can scarcely expect to discuss satisfactorily whether it is done for us or not. It is quite clear, even from the blue-book before us, that on this point there is no agreement.

The theories there suggested are very various; and the only gratifying circumstance is, that throughout the whole medley no one gentleman is bold enough to avow an adherence to a thorough-going theory of negation. Even the Fellows of All Souls decline, we observe, to maintain explicitly that the object of a University is exactly to do nothing.

A very common notion is, that the Universities are places for *study*, and this not for the study of youth and semi-men, but for grown-up gentlemen and bearded scholars. And this was most certainly the general design of the founders of colleges. These great institutions were founded for the benefit of what are called in this age, poor scholars. As we have seen in the case of All Souls, so in general, the object was to train a band or order of rigid, ascetic, semi-monastic students, who were to spend their lives in acquiring the learning of the age.

Nor perhaps was this idea perfectly unsuitable to the purposes and wants of that period. In mediæval society Learning was more than at any other time divorced from the finer and subtler, and given over to the coarse and voluntary energies of the human mind. The learning of that age was analogous to the learning of positive law. It was necessary to master a huge traditional theology, abounding in decisions, technicalities, and positive enactments, which no one could know without study; but which any man of energy and moderate ability could be quite certain of in some degree acquiring; and wherein a strong-natured man of poor parents—used to a hard life, with the dread of poverty behind him, and the hereditary energies of the working people within him—could not, and we see in history in general did not, fail to acquire great information. There was no poetry, no fine literature, no imaginative relaxation, in the scholarship of that time: the bulk of the mighty tomes in which it is enshrined warns the experienced eye

that he must not seek *in them* the record of the rarer thoughts or more elevated moments of human nature—for these come seldom and are soon ended; but of the laborious vigour, the coarse understanding, the deductive reason, which can be used when we will, which proceed on definite assumptions, which therefore lead infallibly to definite conclusions. But this is not to be thought of for the colleges now. The canon law is gone by, the mediæval theology is food for the inferior animals. The finer classics—the lighter thoughts—the more delicate fancies—the most evanescent shades of meaning and of language, these are what we now call scholarship: and we cannot expect to train any great number of persons in any age to spend their lives on these. Keen excitements are at hand, and carry off into the great and busy world the very minds whose exquisite structure is the best adapted for literary discrimination. Those who really enjoy the best books take an interest in human life, concerning which those books are entirely written; and it is not likely that such will be content to hear in the cloister the second-hand stories of others, when the gates are open, the train passes by, and in an hour they can walk in Parliament Street themselves. A strange timidity, an instinctive pedantry, an inaptitude for common life—may force them back again within the narrow cell. But this is painful and rare.

In England of course this is especially true. We are not Germans, who care for what is not. Take up the *Life of Niebuhr* that was translated the other day, and it is surprising to see the eagerness with which he withdraws from the living realities of life—not to the exquisite fancies of the profounder imaginations or the subtler observations of the higher orders, which might and do rest and invigorate and refresh the worn and troubled mind; but to the driest technicalities—to grammar and philology, to Basque refreshments and Polynesian recreations; and what is more

strange still, he does not feel that his taste is queer or extraordinary. He seems conscious that in degree he feels it more powerfully than those who surround him. But the thing itself, the preference of what has been to what is, of what is abstract to what is fleshly, of what is in the grammar to what is in the ledger, the love of letters in general, and the contempt for £. s. d., seems to him the natural notion common to all that are awakened to real enjoyment —that are not of the earth, and earthy. In such a country as that it might be well to afford facilities for a race of students. We might hope that they would be active and cultivated, and ardent and happy. But here in a land of larger enjoyments, and better opportunities, and bolder energies, it would be entailing misery on many to bring up many to a life of research. The taste is rare, and a library of lofty volumes is the worst of prisons to such as think it a prison at all; it is "hard labour" without the stimulus: the bread-mill moves, but what is there "going on" in the Bodleian? Nor is Natural science or Mathematical science better adapted to the inclinations of any great number of common Englishmen; on the contrary, we respect, and perhaps justly, fine scholarship more than a familiarity with cubic equations, or the details of the dissecting room. We must not try to fill many buildings with naturalists, nor did Providence mean many Londoners to be devotees to the "factorial integral". In attempting by large bounties (and such should be the resource of the Universities) to increase much the number of life-long students, we should but add to the supply of stupid and indifferent works, to the list of authors without a call. Why should we pay people to compose a Structural Dissertation on the Walls of Athens, Abstractitudes of the Sciences, Thoughts on Tissue, or a Biography of Greek Heroes anterior to Agamemnon? Some might write more agreeably; but

these, if the partisans of the students—a considerable number of estimable people—had but their way, these and such as these would be the labours of most inhabitants of Magdalene and Merton, which surely were not built for what is so superfluous.

A view exactly opposite to this has been advanced by an intelligent gentleman, who having recently become a legislator, seems entitled to very special attention. The member for Kidderminster, Mr. Lowe, regards Oxford as a "preparation for Australia". He tells us that he has seen in the colonies Oxford men placed in situations in which they had reason "bitterly to regret that their costly education, while making them intimately acquainted with remote events and distant nations, had left them in utter ignorance of the laws of Nature, and placed them under immense disadvantages in that struggle with her which they had to maintain". And we have no doubt that this is so; nor do we deny that the present system of Oxford is open to the sarcasm which is intended. We are not going to argue that there are now at Oxford sufficient facilities for the acquisition of natural science: indeed we hold rather strongly that these facilities might and ought to be somewhat increased. But if Mr. Lowe has, as we collect, a notion or imagination that a University ought to fit men for colonial life—that it professes to do so—that if it neglects to do so, as it does, a sentence of inefficiency is immediately due, we dissent. We imagine that in a hard and earnest conflict with material and brute nature, a literary education can never give any superiority. Take the case of a goldfinder who spends his day bent double grubbing in the bed of a stream for imperceptible dust, of what use is literature to him? Tacitus won't keep him from cold, nor is the Principia a preservative from damp. The thing there is the *knack* of finding gold. All that is requisite to

be known of the laws of Nature is rather obvious, nor will a profounder knowledge be really of extreme advantage. If all the people in Australia were taught a thousand sciences or a thousand languages, the yield of gold would be as it was before. And so of other pursuits. A certain small and rude knowledge of outward objects is all that is commonly wanted by common practitioners, and that knowledge is apt to puzzle if there be any attempt to inculcate it systematically. Turnspits are in general ill-informed about the theory or laws of rotatory motion, nor do the cleverest people tell the time a moment quicker for understanding the works of their watches. The real education for every practical pursuit is specific—a digger wants the habit of digging—a shepherd, of keeping sheep—a mining agent should be bred in the mines. Christchurch will never prepare men for Labuan nor Oriel for the Rocky Mountains; and we suspect even from the case under consideration that a superfluous conversancy with Sydney may much mislead a Reformer in Oxford.

A gentleman of great acuteness has adopted another theory. Mr. Clough is of opinion that the Universities are, ought to be, and must be, "mere finishing schools for the higher classes"—and apparently would reject with impartial equanimity the studious delusions of common Reformers, and the Australian advice of Mr. Lowe.

Now it is quite certain that the Universities do perform the very important office hinted at rather than expressed by Mr. Clough. "If," says Sir James Stephen, "I had the pen of Edward Gibbon, I could draw from my own early experience a picture which would from no unmeet companion for that which he has bequeathed to us of his education at Oxford. The three or four years during which I lived on the banks of the Cam, were passed in a very pleasant, though not a very cheap hotel. But if they had

been passed in the Clarendon in Bond Street I do not think that the exchange would have deprived me of any aids for intellectual discipline or for acquiring literary or scientific knowledge."

And notwithstanding many reforms and innovations, an increase of study and an inroad of private tutors, there can be no doubt at all that to very many of their youthful sojourners both Universities are much as they were. The real gain to perhaps a majority is anything but scholastic. The gentlemen of England are educated at many schools, they come to college for a year or two to learn one another's faces and names, to unlearn the overweening notions of public schools, and the "three-cornered opinions," as somebody calls them, of the private academy. They derive from the society of one another—from wine-parties—from the common *et ceteras* of college life—a certain cultivation, certain friendships, certain manners, which are a step in advance on what in each kind they previously possessed, and give them besides an excellent start in English life. The gentry of England are thus, as it is said, "finished". They take the social type which is to last them for life. But surely this is hardly a sufficient reason for so great colleges? scarcely a sufficient account of such large structures and such enormous revenues? As Sir James says, the Clarendon would do. It is obvious that we must look elsewhere for the complete formulas of academical utility. . . . Nor must we repeat the yet more pernicious cant that education makes educated people cleverer than the uneducated. This idea is still believed in rural districts, where a good deal of conversational information is sometimes derived from reading, and where it is not known that literary men as much over-estimate the importance of literature as the currier in the legend the repulsive resources of the substance leather. But, authors and schoolmasters

apart, the generality of mankind are pretty well agreed that in transactive ability, in common-sense, in industry, in energy, people who read little are at least as eminent as people who read much. "I never," said Sir Walter Scott, "knew a Dominie that was not weak." "Do not," says Mr. Gilbert in his book on banking, "choose a clerk because he studied for one of the learned professions, for that is no advantage." No one goes to Cambridge to inquire for a cutler. A first-class scholar would, in general, be a ninth-rate man-servant. If learning is an advantage for some things, it is a disadvantage for others. What does it then do? In our notion the object of a University education is to train intellectual men for the pursuits of an intellectual life. For though education by training or reading will not make people quicker or cleverer or more inventive, yet it will make them soberer. A man who finds out for himself all that he knows is rarely remarkable for calmness; the excitement of the discovery, and a weak fondness for his own investigations, a parental inclination to believe in their excessive superiority, combine to make the self-taught and original man dogmatic, decisive, and detestable. He comes to you with a notion that Noah discarded in the ark, and attracts attention to it as if it were a stupendous novelty of his own. A book-bred man rarely does this; he knows that his notions are old notions, that his favourite theories are the rejected axioms of long-deceased people: he is too well aware how much may be said for every side of everything to be very often over-weeningly positive on any point.

It is of immense importance that there should be among the more opulent and comfortable classes a large number of minds trained by early discipline to this habitual restraint and sobriety. The very ignorance of such people is better than the best knowledge of half mankind. An uneducated

man has no notion of being without an opinion: he is distinctly aware whether Venus is inhabited, and knows as well as Mr. Cobden what is to be found in *all* the works of Thucydides; but his opinionated ignorance is rather kept in check, when people as strong-headed as himself, as rich, as respectable, and much better taught, are continually avowing that they don't at all know any of the points on which he is ready to decide. And when those who are careful *have* opinions, they are in general able to bear the temperate discussion of them. Education cannot ensure infallibility, but it most certainly ensures deliberation and patience. It forms the opinions of people who can form the opinions of others.

This, too, is a function which increases in difficulty with the increase of civilisation. As society goes on, life becomes more complicated, and its problems more difficult. New perplexities, new temptations, new difficulties, arise with new circumstances; every walk in life is clogged with tedious difficulties, and thronged with countless competitors, and overrun with infinite dangers. The moral problems, the political problems, the social problems, the religious problems, require a greater stress of understanding: we were in simple addition, we *are* in the Differential Calculus. Take the case of politics in this country now and as it was a century and a half ago. In Queen Anne's time the question was whether the Pretender should be King,—whether Popery should be the religion of the state, and that was nearly all;—on so large an issue very inferior and illiterate minds were quite competent to form a sound judgment. Sir Roger de Coverley, for example, who believed in witchcraft, and was not a college man, was quite able to reject the Pope and receive the Queen—"God bless her". But how the poor old gentleman would have been confounded in the present day! what would he have thought

of Free-trade, Protectionism, and Caucasian Christianity? He would, we fear, have reflected in this wise on the General Election: "You see, though I can't quite tell (for I am getting old) what Lord Derby has done with all his old principles, I shall vote for young John Rising, who intends to support him, for you know his father, Sir John, was my very old friend, and knew more of fox-hunting than any one in Worcestershire, notwithstanding some were so foolish as to think me his equal; and though the Chancellor of the Exchequer is said in London to be a Jew, I could not deny but the poor in my country *was* more comfortable than ever." This was good influential reasoning in the first year of the eighteenth century, but it won't do now. We want men to get up facts, weigh principles, suggest illustrations, appreciate arguments; and this is the use of learning.

So too in religion,—how differently are we placed now-a-days in this Babel of sects, and the deluge of criticism, from the old times, when the choice was between two or three distinct creeds, depending on common and conceded postulates, and differing only in the respective correctness of a few not too complicated deductions! Now that the postulates are gone, who is there that can estimate the insuperable task of, as it is phrased, making a religion? And in the minor subjects of taste and refinement, with the growth of literature, the increase of luxury and the advent of æsthetics, who can too highly estimate the difficulty of reviewing works of art, and criticising styles, and comprehending the German speculations? And in the practical concerns of life, though a prolonged education rather interferes than otherwise with a perfect and instinctive mastery of a narrow department, though it disqualifies men for special or mechanical labour and the petty habits of a confined routine, yet for affairs on a considerable scale, for a general estimate of general probabilities, and for changing

the hand and the mind from one species of pursuit to another, a carefully-formed mind and a large foundation of diversified knowledge are indisputably wonderful and all but indispensable aids. Men who blindly and instinctively follow out and feel after the minute details of a single occupation, generally know but that one, and can learn no other. In the increasing and multiplying wealth of the world, in the various and ever-varying ramifications of human industry, it becomes necessary that some people should comprehend the general plan, while others elaborate the special minutiæ; and it is lucky that the very wealth which by its superabundance and the complexity of its nature renders more than anything else all this enlargement of knowledge necessary, also, by getting together in single hands, secures the easy conditions, the pecuniary resources, and the youthful leisure that are the necessary prerequisites for its extensive diffusion. So too by common consent certain of the professions have long been called learned and literate. Not thereby meaning so much that a great deal of literary information is commonly necessary in their everyday practice, as that the tone of mind commonly produced by a calm and deliberate education, by the habit of learning, by the acquisition of abstract knowledge, is especially favourable to the best exercise of the highest faculties in their more abstruse and difficult departments. Particular portions of legal business are very properly conceived to be of this nature; the same may be true occasionally in the applications of medicine; and in many other newer and yet unclassified pursuits similar points often occur requiring the application of much knowledge, and the steady exercise of a disciplined mind. Does Oxford accomplish this? Does it frame a type of character capable of forming the more abstruse opinions, and of transacting the more severe portion of the intellectual business of the world? We can be at any rate at

no loss for an answer. The materials are ample. In public life the Oxford men are conspicuous; they seem more perhaps than the pupils of any other seminary to have a very marked type running through them all, though of course modified and qualified in each by the difference of circumstances and of natural character. They appear to represent a principle, and that in itself is a stimulus to curiosity.

In some respects the character is old enough. In a few outward features, it is certainly rather like that of the mediæval student whom Chaucer sang of some four centuries ago:—

> "A Clerk there was of Oxenforde also,
> That unto logike hadde long ygo.
> As lene was his horse as is a rake,
> And he was not right fat, I undertake,
> But loked holwe and thereto soberly.
> Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
> For he had goten him yet no benefice,
> Ne was nought worldly to have an office:
> For him was lever han at his beddes hed
> A twenty bokes clothed in black or red
> Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
> Than robes riche or fidel or sautrie—
> But all be that he was a philosophre,
> Yet hadde he but litel gold in coffre;
> But all that he might of his friends hente
> On bokes and on lerning he it spent,
> And freely gave for the soules praie
> Of hem, that gave him wherwith to scolaie.
> Of studie toke he most care and hede,
> Not a word spake he more than was need,
> And that was said in forme and reverence,
> And short and quicke and full of high sentence—
> Sonning in moral vertue was his speche,
> And gladly would he lerne and gladly teche."

"I regret to say," observes Dr. Arnold, "that the pre-

vailing spirit of many Oxford men is the very opposite of liveliness."

> "Sire Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoste said,
> Ye ride as still and coy, as doth a maid
> Were new spoused, sitting at the bord
> This day ne herd I of your tongue a word,
> I trow ye studie abouten som sophime,
> But Solomon says that every thing hath time
> For Goddes sake, as beth of better chere
> It is no time for to studien here,
> But precheth not as freres don in Lent,
> To make us for our old sins wepe,
> Ne that thy tale make us not slepe."

A certain speechlessness is still a part of the character. "You will," says Hazlitt, "hear more good things in one day on the top of the coach, going to or coming from Oxford, than in one year from all the residents in that learned seminary." A slightly excitable lady was once asked within our hearing what *she* thought of the literati of Oxford: she said: "They were so stupid I could strike them". But this is not quite conclusive. It is not good that every one should be loquacious or excitable or original: some must listen if it is meant that they should understand. Particularly the custom is to refrain from speaking on their own pursuits;—there is some story of a Head of a House who was presented to Napoleon after the peace of Amiens, and was asked on his return what was his opinion of the French Emperor. "Sir," replied the dignitary, "you see at once he is not a University man, he talks about the *classics*." Such was his opinion.

In moral and political opinions the Oxford man is quite as defined. Mr. Gladstone, to take the most marked and decisive example, is obviously and utterly different from what he would have been if educated anywhere else. He

is the only considerable political Englishman who has undergone what can even by courtesy be called a philosophical training. There is about him and all his writings and in all his speeches a certain desire for principle, a wish to have an ultimatum, a reason, an axiom from which and to which the intellectual effort may start and be referred. His first principles are rarely ours; we may often think them obscure—sometimes incomplete—occasionally quite false; but we cannot deny that they are the result of distinct thought with disciplined faculties upon adequate *data*, of a careful and dispassionate consideration of all the objections which occurred, whether easy or insuperable, trifling or severe. How Dr. Arnold estimates this training—still conveyed from the same text-book as in Chaucer's time—may be read in a hundred passages of his letters and works. "We have been reading," says he, speaking of Aristotle, "some of the Rhetoric in the sixth form this half year, and its immense value struck me again so forcibly that I could not consent to send my son to a University where he would lose it altogether, and where his whole studies would be formal merely and not real, either mathematics or philology—with nothing answering to the Aristotle and Thucydides of Oxford." And again—"If one might wish for impossibilities I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on all subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; and physical science, if studied at all, seems too great to be studied ἐν παρέργῳ: wherefore rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth and that the stars were so many spangles set in the firmament." And he acted on his theory. "You may believe," he remarks with respect to the London University, "that I have not forgotten the dear

old Stagyrite in our examinations, and I hope that he will be construed and discussed in Somerset House as well as in the schools."

In other Oxford men this is as remarkable. You cannot open the writings of the most dissimilar among them without being struck by the thoughtful element which they have in common. There is a perpetual and often quite unconscious employment of expressions and illustrations derived from the Greek, but especially from the Aristotelian philosophy—a certain accuracy in the expression of principles—and a certain keen deductiveness of understanding, which distinguish the works of men whom Nature markedly and of set purpose discriminated from each other; and this lasts their lifetime. Coleridge used to say, that if you took up a philosophical German writer, no matter whether second-rate or first-rate or fourth-rate, you would be struck with a certain carefulness of tone, a curious and guarded discrimination in the use of exact terms, a foreseeing of objections and so on, which would induce you to remark, "Really this writer is a philosopher"; whereâs in fact it was only that the general style of philosophical thought was so diffused in Germany, that any man of fair ability, fair industry and fair power of imitation could easily acquire and affect it. Something of the same sort seems to exist in the very atmosphere of Oxford; for if you turn even from such great writers as Dr. Whewell, Sir John Herschel, or Mr. Mill, to the writing of even an inferior man trained on the characteristically Oxford system, you will feel at once, that although you may and will lose in vigour of originality, in variety of knowledge, in brilliancy of illustration, in liveliness of mind, yet you will gain in mere speculativeness. What theories there are will be expressed, as theories should be, with calmness, with accuracy, with dulness, with carefulness, with an anticipation of objections, after a conversancy with the ideas of what

philosophers have preceded them. On the theoretical side, therefore, we think that Oxford,—we won't say, succeeds; nothing succeeds in this world—but fairly and with much credit approximates to valuable success. On the practical, we fancy that it wholly fails. This seems admitted in the "Evidence". Mr. Denison, for example, who has favoured the Commissioners with some schemes for the improvement of legal education, is decidedly of opinion that *at present* the University man is under a disadvantage.

"The usual routine," he says, "of what is now called a legal education is as follows: a youth of twenty-two years of age, after completing his studies at the University, comes to London to commence the study of the law. He is entered at one of the Inns of Court, is received as a pupil for a year by some eminent conveyancer, to whom he gives 100 guineas for the privilege of going daily to his chambers and seeing the business there transacted. That business is ordinarily the most technical, complicated, and difficult in the whole range of legal practice, and requires great professional knowledge and considerable experience in particular departments of the practical concerns of life. It is therefore obvious that the special knowledge there to be acquired is purely practical, and is confined to few subjects. The youth soon finds that, at the cost of 100 guineas, he has purchased the right of walking blindfold into a sort of legal jungle. Masses of papers are placed daily before him, every sheet of which contains numberless terms, as new and strange to him as the words of a foreign language, and the bare meaning of which he rarely arrives at before the clerk announces that the client has called to take the papers away. Fresh masses of papers replace those that have been thus untimely removed, and bring with them fresh grounds of vexation and despair; and thus throughout the whole year of his pupilage the youth has to struggle with difficulties, which are a hundred-fold greater than they need have been, had he been fortunate enough to have learnt the alphabet of legal science before he undertook to grapple with the most subtle, abstruse, and difficult details of its practice. This unprofitable and disgusting year at length over, the youth is doomed to go through a second year of the like probation, at the same cost and almost as unprofitably, in the chamber of a special pleader or an equity draftsman; and by the end of that year he is either so bewildered or so wearied with wandering through the seemingly endless mazes that obstruct the very

approaches of his profession, that he either gives up the attempt as hopeless, and becomes a clergyman (an event of extremely common occurrence with Oxford men), or finding out that he is at last beginning to feel his way a little, hopes, by dogged perseverance, to attain, sooner or later, to a knowledge of that art which he sees very many persons of only average capacity practising with credit and success."

The system works simply. The educated pupil prepares a draft;—the uneducated practitioner looks it over. "I do not," he remarks, "*quite* see the necessity for those recitals. Did it strike you that they had any relation to the present purpose? I am afraid this operative part would give the court some trouble. Did you find any authority for giving an estate to A.B., his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns? Humph! Humph! Yes, yes, I see you've taken great pains with that original covenant. Yes, yes, we must put something in the place of that." What language to a solemn gentleman who has been during three years the idol of tutors, maybe been a tutor himself, and especially from a man who never heard of Sphacteria and can't define "distributive Justice": no wonder if the victim thinks gently of a grammar-school, or at the first opening absconds into a parsonage. The fact is, that Oxford men want εὐστοχία,—they want intuitiveness. From a defect of liveliness, from an over-caution of understanding, they have not the ταχύ τι, the happy facility which takes hold at once and for ever of the right point or the right questions at the right moment. There is often not spring enough in the nature of such a man; he can go well in the high road of learning, but he won't do for the cross-country exercise of human life. It puts him out. He does not like that there should be virtues not in Aristotle's list, and it is impossible to convince him that there is anything which is not dreamed of in his philosophy. Give him time and he will generally come right, but in this hasty world who can *have* time? as the best speaker in a

concourse of men, is the man who has the best sayings there ready, so in action we must be able to act wisely at once, or else we must either do nothing or act unwisely.

In this respect the Cambridge men do better. A hard and mathematical Johnian is perhaps perfectly prepared for every abstract difficulty of active life. He may want taste and discrimination, and judgment in character, and skill in dealing with men, or art in persuading them; but in the bare application of mere principles, in the thorough mastery of appalling facts, in the technical manipulations—to speak absurdly—of any intellectual pursuit, according at least to our observation, he will never fail. Such men generally see a thing in the right light at first, and if they once get right, all the oratory which ever was or can be, all the eloquence of a private tutor, all the pathos of a senior Fellow, will never induce them to swerve from their pragmatical honesty or to abate one jot of clear intellectual certainty in their dogmatic conviction. But they fail even in intellectual pursuits, when the finer faculties are required; they are good actuaries but bad metaphysicians; when they write books on thoughtful subjects they make blunders without end. Mr. Mill, we believe, somewhere says of the last generation of eminent Cambridge men—that he never heard an *argument* from them which was worth anything, and though this be a trifle contemptuous, yet it is certain that of late the amount of general thought on general subjects for which we are indebted to Cambridge, is immensely less than what we owe to Oxford.

Is not this really good? We asked so long ago that no reader can be asked to remember it, whether there was not something very singular in the old English idea that the educational systems of both the two old Universities were both perfect. Like most odd and old ideas, it has much truth. Is it not perhaps better that we should have one

University which practically devotes itself mainly to the culture of thought, and another which devotes itself principally to the training men for the more difficult species of intellectual action? These are the two duties of a University, as we showed just now. It is perhaps good that they should be kept in a certain measure separate. Each fulfils its own task rather better, if it aim at one mainly, than if it aspire to both equally. Besides, it is to be observed that each selects out of the general society exactly those who are thought to be best fitted to excel in the requirements and studies which constitute its test and its training. A mathematician—the son perhaps of a blacksmith—goes to St. John's; the son of a country vicar, with a taste for moral subjects and the classics, is most probably despatched to Oxford. Each is well trained; the first for the conveyancer's chambers; the second for a rural rectory.

In two points the two Universities coincide—selecting two elements which we believe to be quite necessary for the real education of an intellectual Englishman. They both teach a compact system of learning. If we were teaching a Frenchman who is versatile, or an old Athenian who was versatility itself, this might not be of so great importance, perhaps it would not even be possible, for we question whether those unstable and changeable organisations could be kept resolutely to a narrow pursuit. With the Englishman it is different. His intelligence is slow and stubborn and sure; his memory, though retentive, is not facile; it is certain, therefore, that if you bother him with many things, he will learn none; if you do not allow him to become, as he thinks, *possessed* of some one acquisition, you will discontent him, and he will leave you. "It would be well," so says a thoughtful writer,[1] "to impress on the young men of the present day the value of ignorance,

[1] Sewell on Plato, p. 125.

as well as of knowledge; to give them fortitude and courage enough to acknowledge that there are books which they have not read and sciences which they do not wish to learn, and to make them feel that one of the very greatest defects in a mind is want of unity of purpose, and that everything which betrays this betrays also want of resolution and energy." For if this be not learnt easily and early, it will be learned painfully and late. One by one, day by day, the world will strip off the pretensions and false assumptions which we may put forth, no matter how great they be. What do you do for *me?* she asks; and she will require a solid answer. It has been a great happiness to many that two seats of national learning have consciously or unconsciously taken each a defined course and adopted a rigid system; the one by severe training in philosophers and historians, to teach men what *has* been thought, the other by a discipline in the technicalities of study, to prepare men for the like technicalities of abstruser action.

The other point of substantial unanimity between Oxford and Cambridge is the collegiate system. It is well observed by a gentleman who has given evidence, that this also is suitable to the national character. There is nothing for young men like being thrown into close neighbourhood with young men; it is the age of friendship; and every encouragement should be given—every opportunity enlarged for it. Take an uncollegiate Englishman, and you will generally find that he has *no friends.* He has not the habit. He has his family, his business, his acquaintances, and these occupy his time. He has not been thrown during the breathing-time of human life into close connection with those who are also beginning or thinking of beginning to enter on its labours. School-friendships are childish; "after life" rarely brings many; it is in youth alone that we can engrave deep and wise friendships on our

close and stubborn texture. If there be romance in them, it is a romance which few would tear aside. Of course also the college system, quite beside the labours of Tutors and Fellows, mainly aids in the work of education. All that "pastors and masters" can teach young people, is as nothing when compared with what young people can't help teaching one another. Man made the school: God the playground. He did not leave children dependent upon the dreams of parents or the pedantry of tutors. Before letters were invented, or books were, or governesses discovered, the neighbours' children, the out-door life, the fists and the wrestling sinews, the old games,—the oldest things in the world,—the bare hill and the clear river—these were education. And now, though Xenophon and sums be come, these are and remain. Horses and marbles, the knot of boys beside the schoolboy fire, the hard blows given and the harder ones received—these educate mankind. So too in youth, the real plastic energy is not in tutors or lectures or in books "got up," but in Wordsworth and Shelley; in the books that all read because all like—in what all talk of because all are interested—in the argumentative walk or disputatious lounge—in the impact of young thought upon young thought, of fresh thought on fresh thought—of hot thought on hot thought—in mirth and refutation—in ridicule and laughter—for these are the free play of the natural mind, and these cannot be got without a college.

We admit, however, that these excellences of our elder Universities have often passed into excess—have become defects. The compact system has become exclusive, and the colleges have gained a monopoly. For although it may be quite right and quite prudent, that every one should be taught a compact system, it does not quite follow that every one should be taught the same. Although the general

scheme of Oxford education based on the old philosophy, and the more weighty classics, may still, in our notion, be rightly preserved, there will be no harm in a good sprinkling of mathematicians, and an increase of undergraduates, learned in modern philosophy, or even in a small deposit of naturalists. And though in a general way, everybody should be discouraged from learning everything, some versatile men will attain eminence in several studies, and these should have their reward. A choice between compact systems, as has been said, the good sense of our forefathers found out to be the fitting rule, and this choice which now only exists between the two systems of Oxford and Cambridge, should, without touching the rightful supremacy of the systems that are, be extended to an additional choice at Oxford and at Cambridge, between subsidiary and subordinate systems.

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BISHOP BUTLER.[1]

(1854.)

About the close of the last century, some one discovered the wife of a country rector in the act of destroying, for culinary purposes, the last remnants of a box of sermons, which seemed to have been written by Joseph Butler. The lady was reproved, but the exculpatory rejoinder was, "Why, the box was full once, and I thought they were my husband's". Nevertheless, when we first saw the above announcement of unpublished remains, we hoped her exemplary diligence had not been wholly successful, and that some important writings of Butler had been discovered. In this we have been disappointed. The remains in question are slight and rather trivial; the longest is an additional letter addressed to Dr. Clarke; and in all the rest there is scarcely anything very characteristic, except the remark: "What a wonderful incongruity it is for a man to see the doubtfulness in which things are involved, and yet be impatient out of action, or vehement in it. Say a man is a sceptic, and add what was said of Brutus, *quicquid vult valde vult*, and you say there is the greatest contrariety between his understanding and temper that can be expressed in words:"[2]—an observation which might be borne in mind

[1] *Some Remains (hitherto unpublished) of Joseph Butler, LL.D., sometime Lord Bishop of Durham.*

Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. VI., Part II. Article, Joseph Butler. By Henry Rogers, Author of the *Eclipse of Faith.* Eighth Edition.

[2] *Fragments,* No. ii.

by some English writers who panegyrise Julius Cæsar, and the many French ones who panegyrise Napoleon.

The life of Butler is one of those in which the events are few, the transitions simple, and the final result strange. He was the son of a dissenting shopkeeper in Berkshire, was always of a meditative disposition and reading habit—grew to manhood—was destined to the Dissenting ministry—began to question the principles of Dissent—entered at Oriel College—made valuable acquaintances there—rose in the Church by means of them—obtained, first the chaplaincy of the Rolls, then a decent living—then the rectory of Stanhope, the "golden" rectory, one of the best in the English Church—was recommended by his old friends to Queen Caroline—talked philosophy to her—pleased her (this being her favourite topic)—was made Bishop of Bristol, and thence translated to the richest of Anglican dignities—the prince-bishopric of Durham, and there died.

These are the single steps, and there is none of them which is remote from our ordinary observation. We should not be surprised to see any of them every day. But when we look on the life as a whole, when we see its nature, when we observe the son of a dissenting tradesman, a person of simple and pious disposition, of retiring habits, and scrupulous and investigating mind—in a word, the least worldly of ecclesiastics—attain to the most secular of ecclesiastical dignities, be a prince as well as a bishop, become the great magnate of the North of England, and dispense revenues to be envied by many a foreign potentate, we perceive the singularity of such a man with such beginnings attaining such a fortune. No man could guess from Butler's writings that he ever had the disposing of five pounds: it is odd to think what he did with the mining property and landed property, the royalties and rectories, coal dues and curacies, that he must have heard of from morning till evening.

It is certainly most strange that such a man should ever have been made a bishop. In general we observe that those become most eminent in the sheep-fold, who partake most eminently of the qualities of the wolf. Nor is this surprising. The Church is (as the Article defines it) a congregation of men, faithful indeed, but faithful in various degrees. In every corporation or combination of men, no matter for what purpose collected, there are certain secular qualities which attain eminence as surely as oil rises above water. Attorneys are for the world, and the world is for attorneys. Activity, vigour, sharp-sightedness, tact, boldness, watchfulness, and such qualities as these, raise a man in the Church as certainly as in the State; so long as there is wealth and preferment in the one they will be attained a good deal as wealth and office are in the other. The *prowling* faculties will have their way. Those who hunger and thirst after riches will have riches, and those who hunger not will not. Still to this there are exceptions, and Butler's case is one of them. We might really fancy the world had determined to give for once an encouraging instance of its sensibility to rectitude, of the real and great influence of real and great virtue.

The period at which Butler's elevation occurred certainly does not diminish the oddness of the phenomenon. We are not indeed of those, mostly disciples of Carlyle or Newman, who speak with untempered contempt of the eighteenth century. Rather, if we might trust our own feelings, we view it with appreciating regard. It was the age of substantial comfort. The grave and placid historian (we speak of Mr. Hallam), going learnedly over the generations of men, is disposed to think that there never was so much happiness before or since. Employment was plentiful; industry remunerative. The advantages of material civilisation were enjoyed, and its penalties scarcely foreseen. The troubles of the seventeenth century had died out; those of the nineteenth had not begun.

Cares were few; the stir and conflict in which we live had barely commenced. It was not an age to trouble itself with prospective tasks; it had no feverish excitement, nor over-intellectual introspection; it lived on the fat of the land; *quieta non movere*, was its motto. Like most comfortable people, those of that time possessed a sleepy, supine sagacity, they had no fine imaginings, no exquisite fancies; but a coarse sense of what was common, a "large roundabout common-sense" (these are Locke's words), which was their guide in what concerned them. Some may not think this romantic enough to be attractive, and yet it has a beauty of its own. They did not "look before or after," nor "pine for what was not";[1] they enjoyed what was; a solid homeliness was their mark. Exactly as we like to see a large lazy animal lying in the placid shade, without anxiety for the future and chewing the cud of the past, we like to look back at the age of our great-grandfathers, so solid in its habits and placid in the lapse of years. Nevertheless—and this is what is to our purpose—we must own at once that the very merits of that age are of the earth, earthy; there was no talk then of "obstinate questionings," or "incommunicable dream";[2] heroism, enthusiasm, the sense of the supernatural, deep feeling, seem in a manner foreign to the very idea of it. This is the point of view in which the Tractarian movement was described as "tending towards the realisation of something better and nobler than satisfied the last century".[3] For the clergy, the time was indeed evil. The popular view of the profession seems accurately expressed in a well-known book of memoirs. "But if this was your opinion, how came you not to let your friend Sherlock," the well-known bishop, "into the secret? Why did you not tell him that half the

[1] Shelley: "To a Skylark".

[2] *Ibid.*: "Alastor".

[3] John Henry Newman: Letter to Dr. Jelf on *Tract Ninety*.

pack, and those you most depended on, were drawn off, and the game escaped and safe, instead of leaving his lordship there to bark and yelp by himself, and make the silly figure he has done?" "Oh," said Lord Carteret, "he talks like a parson, and consequently is so used to talk to people who do not mind him, that I left him to find it out at his leisure, and shall have him again for all this, whenever I want him."[1]

The fact of Butler's success is to be accounted for, as we have said, by his personal excellence. Mr. Talbot liked him, *Bishop* Talbot liked him, the Queen liked him, the King liked him. He says himself in these Remains, "Good men surely are not treated in this world as they deserve, yet 'tis seldom, very seldom, their goodness makes them disliked, even in cases where it may seem to be so; but 'tis some behaviour or other which, however excusable, perhaps infinitely overbalanced by their virtues, yet is offensive, possibly wrong, however such, it may be, as would pass off very well in a man of the world".[2] And he must have been alive to the fact in practice. He had every excuse for making virtue detestable. He was educated a Baptist, and brought up at a dissenting academy. He was born in the vulgarest years of English Puritanism, when it had fallen from its first estate, when it had least influence with the higher classes, when the revival which dates from John Wesley had not begun, and the very memory of gentlemen such as Hutchinson or Hampden had passed away. A certain instinctive refinement, a "niceness" and gentleness of nature, preserved him not only from the coarser consequences of his position, but even from that angularity of mind which is not often escaped by those early trained to object to what is established.

[1] Lord Hervey's *Memoirs of the Reign of George II.*, chap. xxxi.
[2] *Fragments*, No. ii.

Of his character the principal point may be described in the words which Dr. Arnold so often uses to denote the end and aim of his education, "moral thoughtfulness". A certain considerateness is, as it were, diffused over all his sentences. To most men conscience is an occasional, almost an external voice; to Butler it was a daily companion, a close anxiety. In a recent novel this disposition is skilfully delineated and delicately contrasted with its opposite. We may quote the passage, though it is encumbered with some detail. "But what was a real trouble to Charles," this is the person whose character is in question, "it got clearer and clearer to his apprehension, that his intimacy with Sheffield was not quite what it had been. They had indeed passed the vacation together, and saw of each other more than ever; but their sympathies with each other were not as strong, they had not the same likings and dislikings; in short, they had not such congenial minds, as when they were freshmen. There was not so much heart in their conversations, and they more easily endured to miss each other's company. They were both reading for honours, reading hard; but Sheffield's whole heart was in his work, and religion was but a secondary matter with him. He had no doubts, difficulties, anxieties, sorrows, which much affected him. It was not the certainty of faith which made a sunshine in his soul, and dried up the mists of human weakness; rather he had no perceptible need within him of that vision of the unseen, which is the Christian's life. He was unblemished in his character, exemplary in his conduct, but he was content with what the perishable world gave him. Charles's characteristic, perhaps more than anything else, was an habitual sense of the Divine Presence—a sense which, of course, did not ensure uninterrupted conformity of thought and deed to itself, but still there it was: the pillar of the cloud before him and guiding him. He felt himself to be God's

creature, and responsible to Him; God's possession, not his own."[1] Again the same character is brought home to us, in a part of Walton's delineation of Hooker, which, indeed, except perhaps for the great quickness attributed to his intellect, might as a whole stand well enough for a description of Butler: "His complexion (if we may guess by him at the age of forty) was sanguine, with a mixture of choler; and yet his motion was slow even in his youth, and so was his speech, never expressing an earnestness in either of them, but an humble gravity suited to the aged. And it is observed (so far as inquiry is able to look back at this distance of time) that at his being a schoolboy he was an early questionist, quietly inquisitive why this was granted and that denied; this being mixed with a remarkable modesty and a sweet serene quietness of nature. . . . It is observable that he was never known to be . . . extreme in any of his desires; never heard to repine or dispute with Providence, but, by a quiet gentle submission and resignation of his will to the wisdom of the Creator, bore the burden of the day with patience; . . . and by this, and a grave behaviour, which is a divine charm, he begot an early reverence for his person even from those that, at other times and in other companies, took a liberty to cast off that strictness of behaviour and discourse that is required in a collegiate life." Something of this is a result of disposition; yet on the whole it seems mainly the effect of the "moral thoughtfulness" which has been mentioned.

The very name of this quality reminds us of a difficulty. We cannot but doubt, with the experience of this age, how far this can be made, or ought to be made, the abiding sentiment of all men; how far such teaching as that of Arnold's tends to introduce a too stiff and anxious habit of mind; how far the perpetual presence of a purpose will

[1] John Henry Newman's *Loss and Gain*, vol. ii., chap. ix.

interfere with the simple happiness of life, and how far also it *can* be forced on the "lilies of the field"; how far the care of anxious minds and active thoughts is to be obtruded on the young, on the cheerful, on the natural. Other questions, too, might be asked, if the inculcation of this temper and habit as a daily, universal obligation, a perpetual and general necessity for all characters, would not, or might not, impair the sanguine energy and masculine activity which are necessary for social action; whether it does not, in matter of fact, even now, "burn and brand" into excitable fancies a few stern truths more deeply than a feeble reason will bear or the equilibrium of the world demands? But whatever be the issue of such questions, on which there is perhaps now no decided or established opinion, there can be no question of the charm of such a character in those to whom it is natural. We may admire what we cannot share; reverence what we do not imitate. As those who cannot comprehend a strain of soothing music, look with interest on those who can; as those who cannot feel the gentle glow of a quiet landscape, yet stand aside and seem inferior to those who do; so in character the buoyant and the bold, the harsh and the practical, may, at least for the moment, moralise and look upwards, reverence and do homage, when they come to a close experience of what is gentler and simpler, more anxious and more thoughtful, kinder and more religious than themselves. At any rate, so thought the contemporaries of Butler. They did, as a Frenchman would say, "their possible" for a good man; at least they made him a bishop.

We gather, however, that their kindness was scarcely successful. Butler was very prosperous; but it does not appear that he was at all happy. In the midst of the princely establishment of his rich episcopate, so anxious a nature found time to be rather melancholy. The respon-

sibilities of so cumbrous a position were but little pleasant to an apprehensive disposition; wealth and honour were finery and foolishness to a quiet and shrinking man. A small room in a tranquil college, daily walks and thoughtful talk, a little income and a few friends—these, and these only, suit a still and meditative mind. Such, however, were denied him. He is said to have taken much pleasure in discussion and interchange of mind; but his life was passed in courts and country parsonages—the one too noisy, the last too still, to think or reason. Nor were there many people, whom we know of, that were congenial to him in that age. Scarcely any name of a friend of his has come down to us; one, indeed, there is—that of Bishop Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, the author of a treatise on the Catechism, a serious work still used for the purposes of tuition, with which, indeed, the name of the writer is now with some so associated by early habit that it is difficult to fancy even Butler on equal social terms with him; the notion of talking to him seems like being asked to converse familiarly with the Catechism itself.

A not unremarkable circumstance, however, shows that Secker, though he was educated at the same academy, could not have been on any terms of extreme intimacy with Butler. Some time after Butler's death, there was a rumour that he had died a Papist. There is no doubt, in fact, that Butler's opinions, being formed on principles of evidence and reasoning too strict to be extremely popular, were not likely to be agreeable to those about him, and when an Englishman sees anything in religion which he does not like, he always, *primâ facie*, imputes it to the Pope. Besides this general and strong argument, there were two particular ones—first, that he had erected a cross in the episcopal chapel at Bristol; secondly, that he was of a melancholy and somewhat of an ascetic turn; reasons

which, though doubtless of force in their day and generation, are not likely to be of avail with us, who know so much more about crosses and fasting than they did then. We might have expected that Secker, as Butler's old friend and schoolfellow, would have been able from his personal knowledge to throw a good deal of light upon the question. He was only, however, able to advance "*presumptive* arguments that Bishop Butler did not die a Papist," which were no doubt valuable; but yet give no great idea of the intimacy between the writer and the person about whom he was writing. Such arguments may easily be found, and have always convinced every one that there was no truth in this rumour. The only reason for which we wish that Secker had been able to say he had heard Butler talk on the subject, and that he was no Papist, is, that we should then have known to whom Butler talked. There is nothing in Butler's writings at all showing any leaning to the peculiar tenets of Roman Catholicism, and there is much which shows a strong opinion against them; and it was far too extreme a doctrine to be at all agreeable to his very English, moderate, and shrinking mind.

Calumny, however, is commonly instructive. It must be granted, that though there is no trace or tendency in the writings of Butler to the peculiar superstitions advocated by the Pope, there is a strong and prevailing tinge of what may be called the principle of superstition, that is, the religion of fear. Some may doubt, especially at the present day, whether there be any true religion of that kind at all; yet it seems, as Butler would have said, but a proper feeling "in such creatures as we are, in such a world as the present one".[1]

We may reflect that there are two kinds of religion, which may for some purposes be called, the one the natural,

[1] See Bishop Halifax's Preface to the *Analogy*.

and the other the supernatural. The former seems to take its rise from mere contemplation of external beauty. We look on the world, and we see that it is good. The Greek of former time, reclining softly in his own bright land, "looked up to the whole sky and declared that the One was God". From the blue air and the fair cloud, the green earth and the white sea, a presence streams upon us. It modulates—

> "With murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forest and the sea,
> And voice of living beings and woven hymns
> Of night and day, and the deep heart of man".[1]

But the true home of the idea is in the starlight sky; we instinctively mingle it with an admiration of infinite space, a cold purity is around us, and the clear and steel-like words of the poet justly reflect the doctrine of the clear and steel-like heaven:—

> "The magic car moved on.
> Earth's distant orb appeared
> The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
> Whilst round the chariot's way
> Innumerable systems rolled,
> And countless spheres diffused
> An ever-varying glory.
> It was a sight of wonder: some
> Were hornèd like the crescent moon;
> Some shed a mild and silver beam
> Like Hesperus across the western sea;
> Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
> Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
> Some shone like suns, and, as the chariot passed,
> Eclipsed all other light.
> Spirit of nature! here!
> In this interminable wilderness

[1] Shelley: "Alastor".

> Of worlds, at whose immensity
> Even soaring fancy staggers,
> Here is thy fitting temple.
> Yet not the lightest leaf
> That quivers to the passing breeze
> Is less instinct with thee:
> Yet not —— "[1]

And so on; and so it will be as long as there are poets to look upon the sky, or a sky to be looked at by them. The truth is, that there is a certain expressiveness (if we may so speak) in nature which persons of imagination naturally feel more acutely than others, and which cannot easily be in its full degree brought home to others, except in quotations of their writings, from which "smiling of the world," as it has been called, more than from any other outward appearance, we infer the existence of an immaterial and animating spirit. This expressiveness perhaps produces its effect on the mind, by a principle analogous to, perhaps in a severe analysis identical with, the interpretative faculty by which we acquire a cognizance of the existence of other human minds. There appear to be certain natural signs and tokens from which we (like other animals) instinctively infer, or rather—for there is no conscious reasoning—in which we silently *see*, life and thought and mind. In this way we interpret the detail of natural expression—the smile, the glance of the eye, the common interjections, the universal tokens of our simplest emotions; those signs and marks and expressions which we make in our earliest infancy without teaching and by instinct, we appear also, by instinct and without learning, to read off, interpret, and comprehend, when used to us by others. The comprehension of this language is perhaps as much an instinct as the using of it. There is no occasion, however, for

[1] Shelley: "Queen Mab".

acute metaphysics; whatever was the origin of this faculty, such a power of interpreting material phenomena, such a faculty of *seeing* life, undoubtedly there is;—however we come by the power, we *can* distinguish living from dead creatures. At any rate, if, like other living creatures, we take a natural cognizance of the simple expressions of life and mind, and without tuition comprehend the language and meaning of natural signs, in like manner, though less clearly and forcibly, because our attention is so much less forcibly directed to them, do we interpret the significance of the beauty and the sublimity of outward nature. "In the mountains" do we "feel our faith".[1] We seem to know there is something behind. There is a perception of something—

> "Far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man—
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things".[2]

The Greek mythology is one entire and unmixed embodiment of this religion of nature, as we may term it, this poetic interpretation of the spirit that speaks to us in the signs and symbols within us. Nor can any sensitive or imaginative mind scrutinise itself without being distinctly conscious of its teaching.

Now of the poetic religion there is nothing in Butler. No one could tell from his writings that the universe was beautiful. If the world were a Durham mine or an exact square, if no part of it were more expressive than a gravel-pit or a chalk-quarry, the teaching of Butler would be as

[1] Wordsworth: "Excursion," book i.
[2] *Ibid.*: "Tintern Abbey".

true as it is now. A young poet, not a very wise one, once said, "he did not like the Bible, there was nothing about flowers in it".[1] He might have said so of Butler with great truth; a most ugly and stupid world one would fancy *his* books were written in. But in return and by way of compensation for this, there is a religion of another sort, a religion the source of which is within the mine, as the other's was found to be in the world without; the religion to which we just now alluded as the religion (by an odd yet expressive way of speaking) of *superstition.* The source of this, as most persons are practically aware, is in the conscience. The moral principle (whatever may be said to the contrary by complacent thinkers) is really and to most men a principle of fear. The delights of a good conscience may be reserved for better things, but few men who know themselves will say that they have often felt them by vivid and actual experience. A sensation of shame, of reproach, of remorse, of sin (to use the word we instinctively shrink from because it expresses the meaning), is what the moral principle really and practically thrusts on most men. Conscience is the condemnation of ourselves. We expect a penalty. As the Greek proverb teaches, "where there is shame there is fear"; where there is the deep and intimate anxiety of guilt—the feeling which has driven murderers, and other than murderers, forth to wastes, and rocks, and stones, and tempests—we see, as it were, in a single complex and indivisible sensation, the pain and sense of guilt, and the painful anticipation of its punishment. How to be free from this, is the question. How to get loose from this—how to be rid of the secret tie which binds the strong man and cramps his pride, and makes him angry at the beauty of the universe—which will not let him go forth like a great animal, like the king of the forest, in the glory of his

[1] Hazlitt: Northcote's *Conversations*, x.

might, but restrains him with an inner fear and a secret foreboding, that if he do but exalt himself he shall be abased; if he do but set forth his own dignity, he will offend One who will deprive him of it. This, as has often been pointed out, is the source of the bloody rites of heathendom. You are going to battle, you are going out in the bright sun with dancing plumes and glittering spear; your shield shines, and your feathers wave, and your limbs are glad with the consciousness of strength, and your mind is warm with glory and renown,—with coming glory and unobtained renown,—for who are you, to hope for these—who are *you*, to go forth proudly against the pride of the sun, with your secret sin and your haunting shame, and your real fear? First lie down and abase yourself—strike your back with hard stripes—cut deep with a sharp knife as if you would eradicate the consciousness—cry aloud—put ashes on your head—bruise yourself with stones, then perhaps God may pardon you; or, better still—so runs the incoherent feeling—give Him something—your ox, your ass, whole hecatombs, if you are rich enough; anything, it is but a chance—you do not know what will please Him—at any rate, what you love best yourself—that is, most likely, your first-born son; then, after such gifts and such humiliation, He may be appeased, He may let you off—He may without anger let you go forth Achilles-like in the glory of your shield—He may *not* send you home as He would else, the victim of rout and treachery, with broken arms and foul limbs, in weariness and humiliation.

Of course, it is not this kind of fanaticism that we impute to a prelate of the English Church: human sacrifices are not respectable, and Achilles was not rector of Stanhope. But though the costume and circumstances of life change, the human heart does not; its feelings remain. The same

anxiety, the same consciousness of personal sin, which led in barbarous times to what has been described, show themselves in civilised life as well. In this quieter period, their great manifestation is scrupulosity, a care about the ritual of life, an attention to meats and drinks, and cups and washings. Being so unworthy as we are, feeling what we feel, abased as we are abased, who shall say that these are beneath us? In ardent imaginative youth they may seem so, but let a few years come, let them dull the will or contract the heart, or stain the mind—then the consequent feeling will be, as all experience shows, not that a ritual is too mean, too low, too degrading for human nature, but that it is a mercy we have to do no more—that we have only to wash in Jordan—that we have not even to go out into the unknown distance to seek for Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus. We have no right to judge, we cannot decide, we must do what is laid down for us,—we fail daily even in this,—we must never cease for a moment in our scrupulous anxiety to omit by no tittle and to exceed by no iota. An accomplished divine of the present day has written a dissertation to show that this sort of piety is that expressed by the Greek word εὐλάβεια, "piety contemplated on the side on which it is a fear of God," and which he derives from εὐλαμβάνεσθαι, "the image underlying the word being that of the careful taking hold, the cautious handling of some precious yet delicate vessel, which with ruder or less anxious handling might be broken," and he subsequently adds: "The only three places in the New Testament in which εὐλαβὴς occurs are these: Luke ii. 25, Acts ii. 5, viii. 2. We have uniformly rendered it 'devout,' nor could this translation be bettered. It will be observed that on all these occasions it is used to express Jewish, and, as one might say, Old Testament piety. On the first it is applied to Simeon (δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβὴς); on the second

to those Jews who came from distant parts to keep the commanded feasts at Jerusalem; and on the third there can scarcely be a doubt that the ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς who carry Stephen to his burial are not, as might at first sight appear, *Christian* brethren, but devout Jews, who showed by this courageous act of theirs, as by their great lamentation over the slaughtered saints, that they abhorred this deed of blood, that they separated themselves in spirit from it, and thus, if it might be, from all the judgments which it would bring down on the city of those murderers. Whether it was also further given them to believe on the Crucified who had such witnesses as Stephen, we are not told; we may well presume that it was. . . . If we keep in mind that in that mingled fear and love which together constitute the piety of man toward God, the Old Testament placed its emphasis on the fear, the New places it on the love (though there was love in the fear of God's saints then, as there must be fear in their love now), it will at once be evident how fitly εὐλαβὴς was chosen to set forth their piety under the old covenant, who, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and leaving nothing willingly undone which pertained to the circle of their prescribed duties. For this sense of accurately and scrupulously performing that which is prescribed with the consciousness of the danger of slipping into a negligent performance of God's service, and of the need therefore of anxiously watching against the adding to or diminishing from, or in any other way altering, that which is commanded, lies ever in the words εὐλαβὴς, εὐλάβεια, when used in their religious signification. Plutarch, in more than one instructive passage, exalts the εὐλάβεια of the old Romans in divine matters, as contrasted with the comparative carelessness of the Greeks. Thus, in his 'Coriolanus,' after other instances in proof, he goes on to

say, 'Of late times also they did renew and begin a sacrifice thirty times one after another, because they thought still there fell out one fault or another in the same; so holy and devout were they to the gods' (τοιαύτη μὲν εὐλάβεια πρὸς τὸ θεῖον Ρωμαίων). Elsewhere he portrays Æmilius Paulus as eminent for his εὐλάβεια. The passage is long, and I will only quote a portion of it, availing myself again of old Sir Thomas North's translation, which, though somewhat loose, is in essentials correct: 'When he did anything belonging to his office of priesthood, he did it with great experience, judgment, and diligence; leaving all other thoughts, and without omitting any ancient ceremony or adding any new; contending oftentimes with his companions in things which seemed light and of small moment; declaring to them that, though we do presume the gods are easy to be pacified and that they readily pardon all faults and scapes committed by negligence, yet if it were no more but for respect of the Commonwealth's sake, they should not slightly or carelessly dissemble or pass over faults committed in those matters'."[1]

This is the view suggested by what Butler has happily called the "presages of conscience," by the "natural fear and apprehension" of punishment, "which restrains from crimes and is a declaration of Nature against them". The great difficulty of religious philosophy is, to explain how we know that these two Beings are the same—from what course and principle of reasoning it is that we acquire our knowledge that the *curiosus Deus*, the watchful Deity, who is ever in our secret hearts, who seeks us out in the fairest scenes, who is apt to terrify our hearts, whose very eyes seem to shine through Nature, is the same Being that animates the universe with its beauty and its light, smoothes

[1] Trench: *On the Synonyms of the New Testament* (p. 191).

the heaviness from our brow and the weight from our hearts, pervades the floating cloud and buoyant air,—

> "And from the breezes, whether low or loud,
> And from the rain of every passing cloud,
> And from the singing of the summer birds,
> And from all sounds, all silence,"[1]

—gives hints of joy and hope. This seems the natural dualism—the singular contrast of the God of imagination and the God of conscience, the God of beauty and the God of fear. How do we know that the Being who refreshes is the same as He who imposes the toil, that the God of anxiety is the same as the God of help, that the intensely personal Deity of the inward heart is the same as the almost neutral spirit of external nature, which seems a thing more than a person, a light and impalpable vapour just beautifying the universe and no more?

If we are to offer a suggestion, as we have stated a difficulty, we should hold that the only way of obviating or explaining the contrast, which is so perplexing to susceptible minds, is by recurring to the same primary assumption which is required to satisfy our belief in God's infinity, omnipotence, or veracity. We cannot *prove* in any way that God is infinite any more than that space is infinite; nor that God is omnipotent, since we do not know what powers there are in Nature—that He is perfectly true, for we have had no experience or communication with Him, in which His veracity could be tested. We assume these propositions, and treat them, moreover, not as hypothetical assumptions or provisional theories to be discarded if new facts should be discovered, and to be rejected if more elaborate research should require it, but as positive and clear certainties, on which we must ever act, and to which we

[1] Shelley: "Epipsychidion".

must reduce and square all new information that may be brought home to us. In these respects we assume that God is perfect, and it is only necessary for the solution of our difficulty to assume that He is perfect in all. We have in both cases the same amount and description of evidence, the same inward consciousness, the same speaking and urging voice, requiring us to believe. In every step of religious argument we require the assumption, the belief, the faith if the word is better, in an absolutely *perfect* Being—in and by whom we are, who is omnipotent as well as most holy, who moves on the face of the whole world and ruleth all things by the word of His power. If we grant this, the difficulty of the opposition between what we have called the natural and the supernatural religion is removed; and without granting it, that difficulty is perhaps insuperable. It follows from the very idea and definition of an infinitely-perfect Being, that He is within us, as well as without us—ruling the clouds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, as well as the fears and thoughts of man—smiling through the smile of Nature, as well as warning with the pain of conscience, "Sine qualitate bonum; sine quantitate magnum; sine indigentiâ creatorem; sine situ præsidentem; sine habitu omnia continentem; sine loco ubique totum; sine tempore sempiternum; sine ullâ sui mutatione mutabilia facientem, nihilque patientem".[1] If we assume this, life is simple; without this all is dark.

The religion of the imagination is, in its consequences upon the character, free and poetical. No one need trouble himself to set about its defence. Its agreeability sufficiently defends it and its congeniality to a refined and literary age. The religion of the conscience will seem to many of the present day selfish and morbid. And doubtless it may become so if it be allowed to eat into the fibre of the

[1] St. Augustine: *De Trinitate*, book v., chap. i., p. 2.

character, and to supersede the manliness by which it should be supported. The whole of religion, of course, is not of this sort, and it is one which only very imperfect beings can have a share in. But so long as men are very imperfect, the sense of great imperfection should cleave to them, and while the consciousness of sin is on the mind, the consequent apprehension of deserved punishment seems in its proper degree to be a reasonable service. However, any more of this discussion is scarcely to our purpose. No attentive reader of Butler's writings will hesitate to say that he, at all events, was an example of the "anxious and scrupulous worshipper, who makes a conscience of changing anything, of omitting anything, being in all things fearful to offend,"[1] and most likely it was from this habit and characteristic of his mind, that he obtained the unenviable reputation of living and dying a Papist.

Of Butler's personal habits nothing in the way of detail has descended to us. He was never married, and there is no evidence of his ever having spoken to any lady save Queen Caroline. We hear, however, for certain that he was commonly present at her Majesty's philosophical parties, at which all questions religious and moral, speculative and practical, were discussed with a freedom that would astonish the present generation. Less intellectual unbelief existed probably at that time than there is now, but there was an infinitely freer expression of what did exist. The French Revolution frightened the English people. The awful calamities and horrors of that period were thought to be, as in part they were, the results and consequences of the irreligious opinions which just before prevailed. Scepticism became what in the days of Lord Hervey it was not, an ungentlemanly state of mind. At no meeting of the higher classes, certainly at none where ladies are present, is there a

[1] Trench, *ubi supra*,

tenth part of the plain questioning and *bonâ fide* discussion of primary Christian topics, that there was at the select suppers of Queen Caroline. The effect of these may be seen in many passages, and even in the whole tendency, of Butler's writings. No great Christian writer, perhaps, is so exclusively occupied with elementary topics and philosophical reasonings. His mind is ever directed towards the first principles of belief, and doubtless this was because, more than any other, he lived with men who plainly and clearly denied them. His frequent allusions to the difficulties of such discussions are likewise suggestive of a familiar personal experience. The whole list of directions which he gives the clergy of Durham on religious argument shows a daily familiarity with sceptical men. "It is come," he says, "I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be false. And accordingly they treat it as if this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." No one would so describe the tone of talk now, nor would there be an equal reason for remembering Butler's general caution against rashly entering the lists with the questioners. Among gentlemen a clergyman has scarcely the chance. "Then, again, the general evidence of religion is complex and various. It consists of a long series of things: one preparatory to and confirming another from the beginning of the world till the present time, and it is easy to see how impossible it must be in a cursory conversation to unite all this into one argument, and represent it as it ought; and, could it be done, how utterly indisposed would people be to attend to it. I say, in cursory conversation; whereas unconnected objections are thrown

out in few words, and are easily apprehended without more attention than is usual in common talk, so that, notwithstanding we have the best cause in the world, and though a man were very capable of defending it, yet I know not why he should be forward to undertake it upon so great a disadvantage and to so little good effect, as it must be amid the gaiety and carelessness of common conversation." It is not likely from these remarks that Butler had much pleasure at the Queen's talking parties.

What his pleasures were, indeed, does not very distinctly appear. In reading we doubt if he took any keen interest. A voracious reader is apt, when he comes to write, to exhibit his reading in casual references and careless innuendoes, which run out insensibly from the fulness of his literary memory. But of this in Butler there is nothing. His writings contain little save a bare and often not a very plain statement of the necessary argument; you cannot perhaps find a purely literary allusion in his writings; none, at all events, which shows he had any favourite books, whose topics were ever present to his mind, and whose well-known words might be a constant resource in moments of weariness and melancholy. There is, too, a philippic in the well-known "Preface" against vague and thoughtless reading, which seems as if he felt the evil consequences more than the agreeableness of that sin. Some men find a compensation in the excitement of writing, for all other evils and exclusions; but it is probable that, if Butler hated anything, he hated his pen. Composition is pleasant work for men of ready words, fine ears, and thick-coming illustrations. Wit and eloquence please the writer as much as the reader. There is even some pleasantness in feeling that you have given a precise statement of a strong argument. But Butler, so far from having the pleasures of eloquence, had not even the comfort of perspicuity. He

never could feel that he had made an argument tell by his way of wording it; it tells in his writings, if it tells at all, by its own native and inherent force. In some places the mode of statement is even stupid; it seems selected to occasion a difficulty. You often see that writers—Gibbon, for instance—believe that their words are good to eat, as well as to read; they had plainly a pleasure in rolling them about in the mouth like sugar-plums, and gradually smoothing off any knots or excrescences; but there is nothing of this in Butler.

The circumstance of so great a thinker being such a poor writer is not only curious in itself, but indicates the class of thinkers to which Butler belongs. Philosophers may be divided into seers on the one hand, and into gropers on the other. Plato, to use a contrast which is often used for other purposes, is the type of the first. On all subjects he seems to have before him a landscape of thought, with clear outline, and pure air, keen rocks and shining leaves, an Attic sky and crystal-flowing river, each detail of which was as present, as distinct, as familiar to his mind as the view from the Acropolis, or the Road to Decelea. As were his conceptions so is his style. What Protagoras said and Socrates replied, what Thrasymachus and Polemo, what Gorgias and Callicles, all comes out in distinct sequence and accurate expression; each feature is engraved on the paper; an exact beauty is in every line. What a contrast is the style of Aristotle! He sees nothing—he is like a man groping in the dark about a room which he knows. He hesitates and suggests; proposes first one formula and then another; rejects both, gives a multitude of reasons, and ends at last with an expression which he admits to be incorrect and an apologetic "let it make no difference". There are whole passages in his writings—the discussion about Solon and happiness in the *Ethics*, is an instance—

in which he appears like a schoolboy who knows the answer to a sum, but cannot get the figures to come to it.

This awkward and hesitating manner is likewise that of Butler. He seems to have an obscure feeling, an undefined perception, of what the truth is; but his manipulation of words and images is not apt enough to bring it out. Like the miser in the story, he has a shilling *about* him somewhere, if people will only give him time and solitude to make research for it. As a person hunting for a word or name he has forgotten, he knows what it is, *only* he cannot say it. The fault is one characteristic of a strong and sound mind wanting in imagination. The visual faculty is deficient. The soundness of such men's understanding ensures a correct report of what comes before them, and its strength is shown in vigorous observations upon it; but they are unable to bring those remarks out, the delineative power is wanting, they have no picture of the particulars in their minds; no instance or illustration occurs to them. Popular, in the large sense of the term, such writers can never be. Influential they may often become. The learned have time for difficulties; the critical mind is pleased with crooked constructions; the detective intellect likes the research for lurking and half-hidden truth. In this way portions of Aristotle have been noted these thousand years, as Chinese puzzles; and without detracting for a moment from Butler's real merit, it may be allowed that some of his influence, especially that which he enjoys in the English universities, is partially due to that obscurity of style, which renders his writings such apt exercises for the critical intellect, which makes the truth when found seem more valuable from the difficulty of finding it, and gives scope for an able lecturer to elucidate, annotate, and expound.

The fame of Butler rests mainly on two remarkable courses of reasoning, one of which is contained in the well-

known Sermons, the second in the *Analogy*. Both seem to be in a great measure suggested by the circumstances and topics of the time. There was a certain naturalness in Butler's mind, which took him straight to the questions on which men differed around him. Generally it is safer to prove what no one denies, and easier to explain difficulties which no one has ever felt. A quiet reputation is best obtained in the literary *quæstiunculæ* of important subjects. But a simple and straightforward man studies great topics because he feels a want of the knowledge which they contain; and if he has ascertained an apparent solution of any difficulty, he is anxious to impart it to others. He goes straight to the real doubts and fundamental discrepancies; to those on which it is easy to excite odium, and difficult to give satisfaction; he leaves to others the amusing skirmishing and superficial literature accessory to such studies. Thus there is nothing light in Butler; all is grave, serious and essential; nothing else would be characteristic of him.

The Sermons of Butler are primarily intended as an answer to that recurring topic of ethical discussion, the Utilitarian Philosophy. He is occasionally spoken of by enthusiastic disciples as having uprooted this for ever. But this is hardly so. The selfish system still lives and flourishes. Nor must any writer on the fundamental differences of human opinion propose to himself such an aim. The source of the great heresies of belief lies in their congeniality to certain types of character frequent in the world, and liable to be reproduced by inevitable and recurring circumstances. We do not mean that the variations of creeds are the native and essential variances of the minds which believe them, for this would render truth a matter of personal character, and make general discussion impossible. We believe that all minds are originally so constituted as to be able to acquire right opinions on all subjects of the first importance to them; but,

nevertheless, that the native bent of their character instinctively inclines them to particular views; that one man is naturally prone to one error, and another to its opposite; that this is increased by circumstances, and becomes for practical purposes invincible, unless it be met on the part of every man by early and vigorous resistance. The Epicurean philosophy is an example of these recurring and primary errors, inasmuch as it is congenial to clear, vigorous and hasty minds, which have no great depth of feeling, and no searching introspection of thought, which prefer a ready solution to an accurate, an easy to an elaborate, a simple to a profound. Draw a slight worldliness—and the events of life will draw it—over such a mind, and you have the best Epicurean. There is a use, however, in discussing topics like these. Nothing would be more perverse than to abstain from proving certain truths, because some men were naturally prone to the opposite errors; rather, on the contrary, should we din them into the ears, and thrust them upon the attention of mankind; go out into the highways and hedges, and leave as few as possible for invincible ignorance to mislead or to excuse. It is much in every generation to state the ancient truth in the manner which that generation requires; to state the old answer to the old difficulty; to transmit, if not discover; convince, if not invent; to translate into the language of the living, the truths first discovered by the dead. This defence, though suggested by the subject, is not, however, required by Butler. He may claim the higher praise of having explained his subject in a manner essentially more satisfactory than his predecessors.

We are not concerned to follow Butler into the entire range of this ancient and well-discussed topic. We are only called on to make, and we shall only make, two or three remarks on the position which he occupies with respect to it.

His grand merit was the simple but important one of having given a less complex and more graphic description of the facts of human consciousness than any one had done before. Before his time the Utilitarians had the advantage of appearing to be the only people who talked about real life and human transactions. The doctrines avowed by their opponents were cloudy, lofty, and impalpable. Platonic philosophy in its simple form is utterly inexplicable to the English mind. A plain man will not soon succeed in making anything of an archetypal idea. If an ordinary sensible Englishman takes up even such a book as Cudworth's *Immutable Morality*, it is nearly inevitable that he should put it down as mystical fancy. True as a considerable portion of the conclusions of that treatise are or may be, nevertheless the truth is commonly so put as to puzzle an Englishman, and the error so as particularly to offend him. We may open at random. "Wherefore," says Cudworth, "the result of all that we have hitherto said is this, that the intelligible natures and essences of things are neither arbitrary nor fantastical, that is, neither alterable by any will or opinion; and therefore everything is necessarily and immutably to science and knowledge what it is, whether absolutely, or relatively to all minds and intellects in the world. So that if moral good and evil, just and unjust, signify any reality, either absolute or relative, in the things so denominated, as they must have some certain natures, which are the actions or souls of men, they are neither alterable by will or opinion. Upon which ground that wise philosopher, Plato, in his *Minos*, determined that Νόμος, a law, is not δόγμα πόλεως, any arbitrary decree of a city or supreme governors; because there may be unjust decrees, which, therefore, are no laws, but the *invention of that which* is, or what is absolutely or immutably just in its own nature; though it be very true also that the arbitrary constitutions of

those that have the lawful authority of commanding when they are not materially unjust, are laws also in a secondary sense, by virtue of that natural and immutable justice or law that requires political order to be observed. But I have not taken all this pains only to confute scepticism or fantasticism, or merely to defend or corroborate our argument for the immutable nature of the just and unjust; but also for some other weighty purposes that are very much conducing to the business we have in hand. And first of all, that the soul is not a mere *tabula rasa*, a naked and passive thing, which has no innate furniture or activity of its own, nor anything at all in it but what was impressed on it from without; for if it were so, then there could not possibly be any such thing as moral good and evil, just and unjust, forasmuch as these differences do not arise merely from outward objects or from the impresses which they made upon us by sense, there being no such thing in them, in which sense it is truly affirmed by the author of the *Leviathan*:[1] 'That there is no common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves,' that is, either considered absolutely in themselves, or relatively to external sense only, but according to some other interior analogy which things have to a certain inward determination in the soul itself from whence the foundation of all this difference must needs arise, as I shall show afterwards; not that the anticipations of morality spring merely from intellectual forms and notional ideas of the mind or from certain rules or propositions printed on the 'soul as on a book,' but from some other more inward and vital principle in intellectual beings, as such, whereby they have a natural determination in them to do certain things, and to avoid others, which could not be, if they were mere naked, passive things."

[1] Part i., chap. vi., p. 24.

It is instructive to compare Butler's way of stating a doctrine substantially similar:—

"Mankind has various instincts and principles of action, as brute creatures have; some leading most directly and immediately to the good of the community, and some most directly to private good.

"Man has several which brutes have not; particularly reflection or conscience, an approbation of some principles or actions, and disapprobation of others.

"Brutes obey their instincts or principles of action, according to certain rules; suppose the constitution of their body, and the objects around them.

"The generality of mankind also obey their instincts and principles, all of them; those propensions we call good, as well as the bad, according to the same rules, namely, the constitution of their body, and the external circumstances which they are in.

"Brutes in acting according to the rules before mentioned, their bodily constitution and circumstances, act suitably to their whole nature.

"Mankind also, in acting thus, would act suitably to their whole nature, if no more were to be said of man's nature than what has been now said; if that, as it is a true, were also a complete, adequate account of our nature.

"But that is not a complete account of man's nature. Somewhat further must be brought in to give us an adequate notion of it, namely, that one of those principles of action, conscience, or reflection, compared with the rest, as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification; a disapprobation of reflection being in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension. And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle or part of our nature, than to other parts; to let it govern and guide only occasionally in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come, from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in,—this is not to act conformably to the constitution of man. Neither can any human creature be said to act conformably to his constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it. And this conclusion is abundantly confirmed from hence, that one may determine what course of action the economy of man's nature requires, without so much as knowing in what degrees of

strength the several principles prevail, or which of them have actually the greatest influence.

"The practical reason of insisting so much upon this natural authority of the principle of reflection or conscience is, that it seems in a great measure overlooked by many, who are by no means the worst sort of men. It is thought sufficient to abstain from gross wickedness, and to be humane and kind to such as happen to come in their way. Whereas, in reality, the very constitution of our nature requires that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority; and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the true meaning of that ancient precept, *Reverence thyself.*"[1]

We do not mean that Cudworth's style is not as good, or better, than the style of Butler; but that the language and illustrations of the latter belong to the same world as that we live in, have a relation to practice, and recall sentiments we remember to have felt and sensations which are familiar to us, while those of Cudworth, on the contrary, seem difficult, and are strange in the ears of the common people.

We do not need to go more deeply into the discussion of Butler's doctrine, for it is familiar to our readers. If there is any incorrectness in the delineation which he has given of conscience, it is in the passages in which he speaks, or seems to speak, of it more as an animating or suggesting, than as a criticising or regulative faculty. The error of this representation has been repeatedly pointed out and illustrated in these pages.[2] It is probable, indeed, that Butler's attention has scarcely been directed with sufficient precision to this portion of the subject. It follows easily, from his favourite principles, that when two impulses—say benevolence and self-love—contend for mastery in the mind, and conscience pronounces that one is a higher and better motive

[1] Preface to Sermons.

[2] *The Prospective Review.*

of action than the other, the office of conscience is judicial, and not impulsive. Conscience gives its opinion, and the will obeys or disobeys at its pleasure; the impelling spring of action is the selected impulse on which the will finally decides to act. At the same time, it must be admitted that there are cases when, for practical purposes, conscience is an impelling and goading faculty. We mean when it is opposed by indolence. There is a heavy lassitude of the will, which is certainly spurred, sometimes effectually, and sometimes in vain, by our conscience. Possibly the correct language may be, that in such cases the desire of ease is opposed by the desire of doing our duty; and that in this case also the office of conscience is simply to say, that the latter is higher than the former. To us it seems, however, if we may trust our consciousness on points of such exact nicety, that it is more graphically true to speak of the sluggishness of the will being goaded and stimulated by the activity of conscience. There is a native inertness in the voluntary faculty which will not come forth unless great occasion is shown it. At any rate, something like this was perhaps the meaning of Butler, and he, no doubt, would have included in the term conscience the desire to do our duty as such, and because it is such.

Butler has been claimed by Mr. Austin, in his *Province of Jurisprudence* (and sometimes since by other writers), as a supporter of the compound Utilitarian scheme, as it has been called, which regards the promotion of general happiness as the single inherent characteristic of virtuous actions, and considers the conscience as a special instinct for directing men in determining what actions are for the general interest and what are not. This theory is, of course, distinct from the common Epicurean scheme, which either denies, like Bentham, the fact of a conscience *in limine*, or, like Mill, professes to explain it away as an effect of illusion and

association. The "Composite theory," on the other hand, distinctly admits the existence and obligatory authority of conscience, but regards it as a ready, expeditious, and, so to say, telegraphic mode of arriving at results which could otherwise be reached only by toilsome and dubious discussions of general utility. In our judgment, however, the writings of Butler hardly warrant an authoritative ascription to him of this philosophy. He doubtless held that the promotion of general happiness, taking all time and all the world into a complete account, is *one* characteristic and ascertainable property of virtue; but there is nothing to show that he thought it was the only one. On the contrary, we think we could show, with some plausibility, from several passages, that, in his judgment, virtuous actions had besides several essential and appropriate qualities. He was, at all events, the last man to deny that they might have; and his whole reasoning on the subject of moral probation seems to imply that, inasmuch as such a state is, according to every appearance, not at all the readiest or surest means of promoting satisfaction and enjoyment, it cannot have been selected for the cultivation of either satisfaction or enjoyment. It is one thing to hold that, the nature of man being what it is, a virtuous life is the happiest as well as best; and another, that such a life is the best because it is the happiest, and that the nature of man was created in the manner it is in order to produce such happiness. The first is, of course, the doctrine of Butler; the second there does not seem any certain ground for imputing to him.

The religious side of morals is rather indicated and implied, than elaborated or worked out by Butler. Yet, as we formerly said, a constant reference to the "presages of conscience" pervades his writings. Although he has nowhere drawn out the course of reasoning fully, or step by

step, it is certain that he relied on the moral evidence for a moral Providence; not, indeed, with foolhardy assurance, but with the cautious confidence which was habitual to him. The ideas which are implied in the term justice—the connection between virtue and reward—sin and punishment—a sacred law and holy Ruler, were plainly the trains of reflection most commonly present to his mind.

Persons who give credence to an intuitive conscience are so often taunted with the variations and mutability of human nature, that it is worth noticing how complete is the coincidence, in essential points of feeling, between minds so different as Butler, Kant, and Plato. We can scarcely imagine among thoughtful men a greater diversity of times and characters. The great Athenian in his flowing robes daily conversing in captious Athens—the quiet rector wandering in Durham coal-fields—the smoking professor in ungainly Königsberg, would, if the contrast were not too great for art, form a trio worthy of a picture. The whole series of truths and reasonings which we have called the supernatural religion, or that of conscience, is, however, as familiar to one as to the other, and is the most important, if not the most conspicuous, feature in the doctrinal teaching of all three. The very great differences of nomenclature and statement, the entire contrast in the style of expression, do but heighten the wonder of the essential and interior correspondence. The doctrine has certainly shown its capability of co-existing with several forms of civilisation; and at least the simplest explanation of its diffusion is by supposing that it has a real warrant in the nature and consciousness of man.

Such is the doctrine of the Sermons; the argument of the *Analogy* is of a different and more complicated kind; and, from its refinement, requires to be stated with care and precaution. As the Sermons are in a great measure a reply

to the caricaturists of Locke, the *Analogy* is, in reality, designed as a confutation of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. It was the object of those writers, as of others since, to disprove the authority of the Christian and Jewish revelation, by showing that they enjoined on man conduct forbidden by the law of Nature, and likewise imputed to the Deity actions of an evil tendency and degrading character. These writers are commonly, and perhaps best, met by a clear denial of the fact; by showing in detail, that Christianity is really open to no such objections, contains no such precepts, and imputes no such actions: the reply of Butler is much more refined and peculiar.

The argument has been thus expounded, and its supposed bearing explained by Professor Rogers in the notice of Butler,—the title of which we have ventured to affix to this Article:—

"Further; we cannot but think that the conclusiveness of Butler's work as against its true object, 'the Deist,' has often been underrated by many even of its genuine admirers. Thus, Dr. Chalmers, for instance, who gives such glowing proofs of his admiration of the work, and expatiates in a congenial spirit on its merits, affirms that 'those overrate the power of analogy who look to it for any very distinct or positive contribution to the Christian argument. To repel objections, in fact, is the great service which analogy has rendered to the cause of Revelation, and it is the *only service* which we seek for at its hands.' This, abstractedly, is true; but, *in fact*, considering the *position* of the bulk of the objectors, that they have been invincibly persuaded of the truth of theism, and that their objections to Christianity have been exclusively or chiefly of the kind dealt with in the *Analogy*, the work is much more than an *argumentum ad hominem*—it is not simply of negative value. To such *objectors* it logically establishes the truth of Christianity, or it forces them to recede from theism, which the bulk will not do. If a man says, 'I am invincibly persuaded of the truth of proposition A, but I cannot receive proposition B, because objections α, β, γ are opposed to it; if these were removed, my objections would cease'; then, if you can show that α, β, γ equally apply to the proposition A, his reception of which, he says, is based on invincible evidence, you do really compel such a man to

believe that not only B *may* be true, but that it *is* true, unless he be willing (which few in the parallel case are) to abandon proposition A as well as B. This is precisely the condition in which the majority of Deists have ever been, if we may judge from their writings. It is usually the *a priori* assumption, that certain facts in the history of the Bible, or some portions of its doctrine, are unworthy of the Deity, and incompatible with his character or administration, that has chiefly excited the incredulity of the Deist; far more than any dissatisfaction with the positive evidence which substantiates the Divine origin of Christianity. Neutralise these objections by showing that they are *equally* applicable to what he declares he cannot relinquish – the doctrines of theism; and you show him, if he has a particle of logical sagacity, not only that Christianity may be true, but that it is so; and his only escape is by relapsing into atheism, or resting his opposition on other objections of a very feeble character in comparison, and which, probably, few would ever have been contented with alone; for, *apart* from those objections which Butler repels, the historical evidence for Christianity—the evidence on behalf of the integrity of its records and the honesty and sincerity of its founders –showing that they *could* not have constructed such a system if they *would*, and *would* not, supposing them impostors, if they *could*—is stronger than that for any fact in history.

"In consequence of this position of the argument, Butler's book, to large classes of objectors, though practically an *argumentum ad hominem*, not only proves Christianity *may* be true, but in all logical fairness proves it *is* so. This he himself, with his usual judgment, points out. He says: 'And objections which are equally applicable to both natural and revealed religion are, properly speaking, answered by its being shown that they are so, *provided the former be admitted to be true*'."

No one can deny the ingenuity of this line of reasoning, but we can only account for the great assent which it has received, by supposing that the goodness of the cause for which it is commonly brought forward has not unnaturally led to an undue approbation of the argument itself. From the amount of authority in its favour we feel some diffidence, but otherwise we should have said, without hesitation, that it was open to several objections.

In the first place, so far from its being probable that Revelation would have contained the same difficulties as

Nature, we should have expected that it would explain those difficulties. The very term Supernatural Revelation implies that previously and by nature man is, to a great extent, in ignorance; that particularly he is unaware of some fact, or series of facts, which God deems it fit that he should know. The instinctive presumption certainly is, that those facts would be most important to us. No doubt it is possible that, for incomprehensible reasons, a special revelation should be made of facts purely indifferent, of the date when London was founded, or the precise circumstances of the invasion by William the Conqueror. But this is in the highest degree improbable. What seems likely (and the whole argument is essentially one of likelihood), according to our mind, is that the Revelation which God would vouchsafe to us would be one affecting our daily life and welfare, would communicate truths either on the one hand conducing to our temporal happiness in the present world, or removing the many doubts and difficulties which surround the general plan of Providence, the entire universe, and our particular destiny. These are the two classes of truths on which we seem to require help, and it is in the first instance more probable that assistance would be given us on those points on which it is most required.

The argument of Butler, of course, relates to our religious difficulties. And it seems impossible to deny that this is the exact class of difficulty which it is most likely a revelation, if given, would explain. No one who reasons on this subject is likely to doubt that the natural faculties of man are more clearly adequate to our daily and temporal happiness, than to the explanation of the perplexities which have confounded men since the beginning of speculation—of which the mere statement is so vast—which relate to the scheme of the universe and the plan of God. This is the one principle on which the most extreme sceptics, and the

most thorough advocates of revelation, meet and agree. The sceptic says, "Man is not born to resolve the mystery of the universe; but he must nevertheless attempt it, that he may keep within the limits of the knowable": which really means that he is to fold his hands and be quiet; to abstain from all religious inquiry; to confine himself to this life, and be industrious and practical within its limits. The advocate of revelation is for ever denying the competency of man's faculties to explain, or puzzle out, what in the large sense most concerns him. There are difficulties celestial, and difficulties terrestrial; but it is certainly more likely that God would interfere miraculously to explain the first than to remove the second.

Let us look at the argument more at length. The supposition and idea of a "miraculous revelation" rest on the ignorance of man. The scene of Nature is stretched out before him; it has rich imagery, and varied colours, and infinite extent; its powers move with a vast sweep; its results are executed with exact precision; it gladdens the eyes, and enriches the imagination; it tells us something of God—something important, yet not enough. For example, difficulties abound; poverty and sin, pain and sorrow, fear and anger, press on us with a heavy weight. On every side our knowledge is confined, and our means of enlarging it small. Of this the outer world takes no heed; Nature is "unfeeling"; her laws roll on; "beautiful and dumb," she passes forward and vouchsafes no sign. Indeed, she seems to hide, as one might fancy, the dark mysteries of life which seem to lie beneath; our feeble eyes strain to look forward, but her "painted veil" hangs over all, like an October mist upon the morning hills. Here, as it seems, revelation intervenes; God will break the spell that is upon us; will meet our need; will break, as it were, through the veil of Nature; He will show us of Himself. It is not likely, surely,

that He will break the everlasting silence to no end; that, having begun to speak, He will tell us nothing; that He will leave the difficulties of life where He found them; that He will repeat them in His speech; that He will revive them in His word. It seems rather, as if His faintest disclosure, His least word, would shed abundant light on all doubts, would take the weight from our minds, would remove the gnawing anguish from our hearts. Surely, surely, if He speaks He will make an end of speaking, He will show us some good, He will destroy "the veil that is spread over all nations," and the "covering over all people"; He will not "darken counsel by words without knowledge".

To this line of argument we know of but one objection; it may be said, that, from the immensity of the universe in which man is, reasons may exist for communicating to him facts of which he cannot appreciate the importance, but a belief in which may nevertheless be most important to his ultimate welfare. Of this kind, according to some divines, is the doctrine of the "Atonement". As they think, it is impossible to explain the mode in which the death of Christ conduces to the forgiveness of sin, or why a belief in it should be made, as they think it is, a necessary preliminary to such forgiveness. They consider that this is a revealed matter of fact; part of a system of things which is not known now, which would very likely be above our understanding if it were explained, which, at all events, is not explained. We reply, that the revelation of an inexplicable fact is possible, and that, if adequate evidence could be adduced in its favour, we might be bound to acquiesce in it; but that, on the other hand, such a revelation is extremely improbable: so far as we can see, there was no occasion for it; it helps in nothing, explains to us nothing; it enlarges our knowledge only thus far, that for some unknown reason we are bound to believe something from which certain effects

follow in a manner which we cannot understand. Such a revelation is, as has been said, possible; but it is much more likely, *a priori*, that a revelation, if given, would be a revelation of facts suited to our comprehension, and throwing a light on the world in which we are.

The same remark is applicable to a revelation commanding rites and ceremonies which do not come home to the conscience as duties, and of which the reasons are not explained to us by the revelation itself. The Pharisaic code of "cups and washings" is an obvious instance. It is obviously most improbable that we should be ordered to do these things. The fact may be so; but the evidence of it should be overwhelming, and should be examined with almost suspicious and sceptical care. A revelation of a rule of life which approves itself to the heart, which awakens conscience, which seems to come from God, is the greatest conceivable aid to man, the greatest explanation of our most practical perplexities; a revelation of rites and ordinances is a revelation of new difficulties, telling us nothing of God, imposing an additional taskwork on ourselves.

We are to remember, that the *Analogy* is, as the Germans would speak, a "Kritik" of every possible revelation. The first principle of it rests on the inquiry, "What would it be likely that a revelation, if vouchsafed, would contain?" The whole argument is one of preconception, presumption, and probability. It claims to establish a principle, which may be used in defence of any revelation, the Mahomedan as well as the Christian; according to it, as soon as you can show that a difficulty exists in Nature, you may immediately expect to find it in revelation. If carried out to its extreme logical development, it would come to this, that if a catalogue were constructed of all the inexplicable arrangements and difficulties of Nature, you might confidently anticipate that these very same difficulties

in the same degree and in the same points would be found in revelation. Both being from the same Author, it is presumed that each would resemble the other. The principle, even to this length, is enunciated by Mr. Rogers; the difficulties of Nature are the α β γ of the extract: and he asserts, that if you can show that all of them exist in one system, you have every reason to expect *all* of them in the other. Yet, surely, what can be more monstrous than that a supernatural communication from God should simply enumerate all the difficulties of His natural government and not enlighten us as to any of them—should revive our perplexities without removing them—should not satisfy one doubt or one anxiety, but repeat and proclaim every fact which can give a basis to them both?

The case does not rest here. There is a second ground of objection to the argument of the *Analogy* on which we are inclined to lay nearly equal stress. As has been said, it is most likely that a revelation from God would explain at least a part of the religious difficulties of man; and, in matter of fact, all systems purporting to be revelations have in their respective degrees professed to do so. They all deal with what may be called the system of the universe—its moral plan and scheme; the destiny of man therein—the motives from which God created it—and the manner in which He directs it. Throughout the whole range of doctrines, from Mormonism up to Christianity, no one has ever gained any acceptance, has ever, perhaps, been sincerely put forward, which did not deal with this whole range of facts—which did not tell man, according to his view, whence he is, and whither he goes. Revelations, as such, are communications concerning eternity. Now, it seems to us, that so far from its being likely, *a priori*, that a revelation of this sort would contain the same perplexing difficulties which cause so much evil in this world, in the

same degree in which they exist here, it would be scarcely possible by any evidence, *a posteriori*, to establish the communication of such a system from the Divine Being. It seems clear on the surface of the subject that, the extent of the unknown world being so enormous in comparison with that which is known, this scene being so petty, and the plan of Providence so vast—earth being little, and space infinite—Time short, and Eternity long—a difficulty, which is of no moment in so contracted a sphere as this, becomes of infinite moment when extended to the sphere of the Almighty. From the smallness of the region which we see —the short time which we live—from the few things which we know—it may well be that there are points which perplex the feebleness of our understanding and puzzle the best feelings of our hearts. We see, as some one expresses it, the universe "not in plan but in section"; and we cannot expect to understand very much of it. But when our knowledge increases—when, by a revelation, that plan is unfolded to us—when God vouchsafes to communicate to us the system on which He acts, then it is rational to expect those difficulties would diminish—would gradually disappear as the light dawned upon us—would vanish finally when the dayspring arose on our hearts. If a difficulty of Nature be repeated in revelation, it would seem to show that it was not, as we had before supposed, a consequence of our short-sighted views and contracted knowledge, but a real inherent element in the scheme of the universe; not a petty shade on a petty globe, but a pervading inherent stain, extending over all things, destroying the beauty of the universe, impairing the perfectness of all creation. Take, as an instance, the extreme doctrine of Antinomian Calvinism—suppose that the eternal condition of man depended in no degree on his acts, or works, or upon himself in any form, but on an arbitrary act of

selection by God, which chose some, independently of any antecedent fitness on their part, for eternal happiness, and consigns all others—irrespective of their guilt or innocence —to eternal ruin. Nothing, of course, can be more shocking than such a doctrine when stated in simple language; and if it really were contained in any document that professes to be a revelation, we should be plainly justified in passing it by as a document which no evidence would prove to have been inspired by God. Yet the doctrine certainly does not want partial analogies in this world. The condition of men here does seem to be in a considerable measure the result not of what they do, or of what their characters are, but of the mere circumstances in which they are placed, over which they have no control, choice, or power. One man is born in a ditch, another in a palace; one with a gloomy and painful, another with a cheerful and happy mind; one to honour, another to dishonour. We invent words—fortune, luck, chance—to express in a subtle way the notion that some seem the favourites of circumstance, others the scapegoats. So far as it goes, this is a distinct "election" on the part of God of some to misery, of others to felicity, irrespective of their personal qualities. Accordingly, it may be argued, why should we not expect to find the same in the world of revelation, which is from the hand of the same Creator? But this will scarcely impose on any one. A certain indignation arises within us—Conscience uplifts her voice, and we reply, "It may well be that for a short time God may afflict His people without their own fault, but that He should do so for ever—that He should make no end of injustice—that He favours one without a reason, and condemns another without a fault—this, come what may, we will not believe—we would sooner cast ourselves at large on the waste of uncertainty;—pass on with your teaching, and ask God, if so be that He will pardon you for attribut-

ing such things to Him". We need not further enlarge on this.

Again—and in the practical conduct of the argument this is a very material consideration—all revelations impute *intentions* to God. Acts are done, observances enjoined, a providential plan pursued, for reasons which are explained. The cause of this is evident from our previous reasoning. As we have seen, all revelations profess to vindicate the ways of God to man; and it is impossible to do so effectually without declaring to us at least some of His motives and designs. It is most important to observe, that no analogy from Nature can justify us in judging of these except by the standard of right or wrong which God has implanted within us. From external observation we learn almost nothing of God's intentions. The scheme is too large; the universe too unbounded. One phenomenon follows another; but, except in a few cases, and then very dubiously, we cannot tell which was created for which—which was the design—which the means—which the determining object—and which the subservient purpose. Even in the few cases in which we do impute such intentions, we do so because they seem to be in harmony with God's moral character; they are not strictly proved, they are mere conjectures; and we should reject at once any that might seem ethically unworthy. But the case is different with a revelation which, from its own nature, unfolds ends and instruments in their due measure and their actual subordination, which develops an orderly system, and communicates hidden motives and unforeseen designs. A recent writer, for example, thus defends certain apparent cruelties of the Old Testament by stating those of Nature: "God," he says, "sends His pestilence, and produces horrors on which imagination dare not dwell; horrors not only physical, but indirectly moral; often transforming

man into something like the fiend so many say he can never become. He sends His famine, and thousands perish—men and women, and 'the child that knows not its right hand from its left'—in prolonged and frightful agonies. He opens the mouths of volcanoes and lakes; boils and fries the population of a whole city in torrents of burning lava, etc., etc." [1]—with much else to the same purpose. But this must not be adduced in extenuation of anything of which the reasons are narrated; on the contrary, these last must be judged of by the moral faculties which are among God's highest gifts. To the infliction of pain, with an express view to what conscience tells us to be an unworthy object, outward Nature does and can afford no parallel. She has no avowals; it is but from conjecture that we conceive her motives; her laws pass forward; the crush of her forces is upon us; like a child in a railway, we know not anything. The incomprehensible has no analogy to the explained; the mysterious none to that on which the oracle has intelligibly spoken.

Lastly, for a similar reason it is impossible that there should be any analogy in Nature for a precept from God opposed to the law of conscience. External Nature gives no precept; our knowledge of our duty comes from within; the physical world is subordinate to our inward teaching; it is silent on points of morality. On the other hand, a revelation, supposing satisfactory means of attesting it were found, might possibly contain such a precept. It is very painful to put such suppositions before the mind; but the

[1] Professor Rogers's *Defence of the "Eclipse of Faith,"* p. 43. It is to be observed, we are not at all speaking of the facts of the Old Testament; we are but limiting the considerations on which the above writer has rested its defence. These refined reasonings but weaken the case they are brought to support. "I did not know," said George III., "that the Bible needed an apology."

pain is inherent in the nature of the subject. The topic of the difficulties and perplexities of man cannot, by any artifice of rhetoric, be rendered pleasing. In such a case, supposing there to be no difficulty of evidence in the case, our duty might be to obey God even against conscience, from that assurance of His essential perfection which is the most certain attestation of conscience. But the existence of such a difficulty is in the highest degree improbable; it is one which ought only to be admitted on the completest proof and after the most rigid straining of evidence; it is, from the nature of the case, without a parallel in the common and unrevealed world.

To all these considerable objections, we believe the argument of the *Analogy* is properly subject. We think in general that, according to every reasonable presumption, a revelation would not repeat the same difficulties as are to be found in Nature, but would remove and explain some of them; that difficulties, which are of small importance in the natural world, on account of the smallness of its sphere and the brevity of its duration, become of insuperable magnitude when extended to infinity and eternity, when alleged to be co-extensive with the universe, and to be inherent in its scheme and structure; and that—what is of less universal scope, but still of essential importance—Nature offers no analogy to the ascription by any professed revelation of an unworthy intention to God, or the inculcation through it of an immoral precept on man.

It is impossible, then, by any such argument as this, to remove from moral criticism the entire contents of any revelation. According to the more natural view, the unimpeachable morality of those contents is a most essential part of the evidence on which our belief must rest; and this seems to remain so, notwithstanding these refinements. On the other hand, we do not contend that the

reasoning of the *Analogy* is wholly worthless. If Butler's[1] argument had only been adduced to this extent; if it had only been argued that, though a revelation might be expected to explain some difficulties, it could not be expected to explain all; that a certain number would, from our ignorance and unworthiness, still remain; and these residuary difficulties would be of the same order, class, and kind, to which we were accustomed; that the style of Providence, if one may so say, would be the same in the newly-communicated phenomena as we had observed it to be in those we were familiar with before,—there could be little question of the soundness of the principle. No one would expect that there would be new difficulties introduced by a revelation; what difficulties were found in it we should expect to be identical with those observed before in Nature; or, at least, to be similar to them, and likely to be explained in the same way by a more adequate knowledge of God's purposes. We should particularly expect the difficulties of revelation to be *like* those of Nature, limited in time and range, not extending to the entire scheme of Providence, not diffused through infinity and eternity, not imputing evil intentions to God, not inculcating immoral precepts on man. We can hardly be said to *expect* to find difficulties in revelation at all; the utmost that seems probable, *a priori*, is, that it should leave unnoticed some of those of Nature. Nevertheless, there is no violent, no overwhelming improbability in the fact of some perplexing points being contained in a communication from God; we are so weak, that it may be we cannot entirely understand

[1] We doubt, however, if Butler would at all have accepted Mr. Rogers's statement of his view, though it is perhaps the most common interpretation of him. Probably, he really meant no more than what we contend for, though his language is not always so limited in terms.

the smallest intimation from the Infinite Being. And if difficulties are found there, they are, of course, less perplexing, when resembling those which we knew before, than if they be wholly distinct and new in kind. But this principle is, on the face of it, very different from the admission of an antecedent probability, that all the difficulties discoverable in Nature would be daguerreotyped in a revelation.

The difference is seen very clearly by looking at the argument which Butler's reasoning is intended to confute. Suppose a professed revelation to be laid before a person who was before unacquainted with it, and that he finds in it several perplexing points. According to Butler's principle, or what is supposed by Mr. Rogers to be Butler's principle, it is enough to reply: You have those same difficulties in Nature before; you cannot consistently object to them now; they have not prevented your ascribing Nature to a Divine Author; they should not prevent you from ascribing to Him this revelation. Nature is so full of difficulties, that almost every doctrine that has ever been attributed to revelation may be provided with a parallel more or less apt. Consequently, it would be almost needless to criticise the contents of any alleged revelation, when we may be met so easily by such a reply. No careful reasoner would attempt that criticism. According to the doctrine which we have reiterated, we should deem it a difficulty that these perplexing points should be found in a revelation; but that difficulty would not amount to much, would not counterbalance strong evidence, if it could be shown that the system claiming to be revealed, although leaving these points unexplained, threw ample light on others; that what gave cause for perplexity was quite subordinate to what removed perplexity; that no immoral actions were enjoined on man; no unworthy motives imputed to God; no vice attributed to the whole scheme and plan of the Creator. There would therefore

remain the largest scope for internal criticism on all systems claiming to be messages from God; on the very face they must seem worthy of Him: in their very essence they must seem good.

This is plainly the obvious view. The natural opinion certainly is that the moral and religious faculties would be those on which we should primarily depend, in judging of an alleged communication from heaven; in deciding whether it have a valid claim to that character or no. These faculties are those which, antecedently to revelation, determine our belief in all other moral and religious questions, and it is therefore natural to look to them as the best judges of the authenticity of an alleged revelation. Many divines, however, struggle to deny this. Thus, in the memoir of Butler we are now reviewing, Mr. Rogers observes,—

"The immortal *Analogy* has probably done more to silence the objections of infidelity than any other ever written from the earliest 'apologies' downwards. It not only most critically met the spirit of unbelief in the author's own day, but is equally adapted to meet that which *chiefly* prevails in all time. In every age, some of the principal, perhaps *the* principal, objections to the Christian Revelation have been those which men's *preconceptions* of the Divine character and administration—of what God *must* be, and of what God *must* do—have suggested against certain facts in the sacred history, or certain doctrines it reveals. To show the objector, then (supposing him to be a theist, as nine-tenths of all such objectors have been), that the very same or similar difficulties are found in the structure of the universe and the divine administration of it, is to wrest every *such* weapon completely from his hands, if he be a fair reasoner and remain a theist at all. He is bound, by strict logical obligation, either to show that the parallel difficulties do *not* exist, or to show how he can solve them, while he *cannot* solve those of the Bible. In default of doing either of these things, he ought either to renounce all *such* objections to Christianity, or abandom theism altogether. It is true, therefore, that though Butler leaves the alternative of atheism open, he hardly leaves any other alternative to nine-tenths of the theists who have objected to Christianity."

And there is a perpetual reiteration in the *Eclipse of Faith*[1] of the same reasoning. In fact, so far as the latter work has a distinct principle, this argument may be said to be that principle. The answer is, that the proof of all "revelation" itself rests on a "preconception" respecting the Divine character, and that, if we assume the truth of that one "preconception," we must not reject any others which may be found to have the same evidence. We refer, of course, to the assumption of God's veracity; which can only be proved by arguments that, if admitted, would likewise justify our attributing to Him all other perfect virtues. It is evident that a doubt as to this attribute is not only impious in itself, but quite destructive of all confidence in any communication which may be received from Him. And yet, on what evidence does its acceptance rest? It cannot be said to be demonstrated by what scientific men call "natural theology". Competent and careful persons examine the material world, the structure of animals and plants, the courses of the planets, the muscles of man, and they find there a great preponderance of benevolence. They show, with great labour and great merit, that the Being who arranged this universe is, on the whole, a benevolent Being; but does it follow that He will tell the truth? "In crossing a heath," says Paley, "suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer: but, suppose I had found a *watch* on the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch came to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer I had before given, that, for anything I knew, it had been always there." And he shows, with his

[1] *The Eclipse of Faith; or a visit to a religious sceptic.* By Henry Rogers. London, 1852.

usual power, that this watch was, in all likelihood, made by a watchmaker. There is nothing cleverer, perhaps, in argumentative writing, than the way in which that argument is stated and pointed. But what evidence is there that the watchmaker was *veracious?* The amplest examination of the most refined designs, the minutest scrutiny of the most complex contrivances, do not go one hair's breadth to establish any such conclusion. Nor can it be shown that the virtue of veracity is identical with, or consequent on, the virtue of simple benevolence. We know well in common life that there are such things as pleasing falsehoods, and that such things exist as disagreeable truths. A person (what we ordinarily call a good-natured person) whose only motive is simple benevolence, will constantly assert the first and deny the second. In its application to religion this tendency cannot be illustrated without suppositions which it is painful even to make; but yet they must be made for a moment, or the necessary argument must be left incomplete. Suppose, what is doubtless true, that the belief in a "future state," even if false, contributes to the temporal happiness of man in this world; that it does more to enlarge his hopes, stimulate his imagination, and alleviate his sorrows, than any one other consideration; that it contributes to the order of society and the progress of civilisation; that it is, as some one says, "the last restraint of the powerful, and the last hope of the wretched". Indisputably, a Being whose only motive was benevolence, who admitted no higher consideration, who looked steadily and solely to our mere happiness, would endeavour to instil that belief although it were quite untrue, would not think that *that* had anything to do with the question, would not hesitate to make a false revelation to confirm men in a belief so pleasant, so advantageous, so consolatory. Perhaps this supposition drives the argument home. We see that it is necessary for us to admit a "pre-

conception" as to the character of God before we can even begin to prove the truth of a revelation; that we *must* reason of "what God *must* be and God *must* do," before we show that there is even a presumption in favour of any facts, or any doctrines, which are revealed in the "sacred history".

We have hinted, in an earlier part of this essay, that this doctrine of God's veracity seems to us to rest on the general assumption of the existence of a "perfect" Being, who rules and controls all things. It is, perhaps, the Divine attribute of which it is most difficult to find a trace in Nature. Of His omnipotence, justice, benevolence, we cannot, indeed, find absolute proof; for we believe that those attributes are infinite, and we can only prove them strictly with respect to the finite and very circumscribed world which we see and know. Yet, at the same time, we discern indications and strong probabilities, that the Ruler of the world possesses these attributes; we can hardly be said to be able to do this with His veracity. The speechlessness of nature, if we may again so speak, deprives us of any such evidence. All Theism is of the nature of faith. We can never *prove* from experience any being to be infinite, for our experience itself is essentially small and finite. We can often, however, as in the instance of the attributes of God above enumerated, and of others which might be added, establish by observation that the qualities in question exist in a certain degree, and we have only to rely on the principle of faith for our belief that these qualities exist in a perfect and supreme degree. In the case of the Divine veracity, it should seem that we believe it to exist in a perfect and infinite degree, without, from the peculiarity of our circumstances, being able to fortify it by any test or trial from experience.

Present controversies show that there should be a distinct understanding as to this matter. Such writers as the author of the *Eclipse of Faith* perpetually strive to justify

what they think the difficulties of revelation, by insinuating —we might say inculcating—a scepticism as to the religious faculties and conscience of man. These faculties are at one time said to be "depraved"; once they were trustworthy, but man is fallen from that high estate; he can only now believe what is announced to him externally. But how can we then rely on those "depraved" faculties for our belief in the truthfulness of the Being who announces these things? At another time all the horrid superstitions, all the immoral rites, all the wretched aberrations of savage and licentious nations, are enumerated, displayed, inculcated, in order to convince us that these faculties give no certain information. We will not quote the passages. We do not like to read hard attacks even on the worst side of human nature; we cannot, like some, gloat upon such details. The argument is plain without any painful accuracy. How can you believe in the "intuition" of the Divine justice, when the Hindoo says this? How in that of His holiness, when the Papuan accepts that impurity? But this is no defence for any revelation. The writers who exult in such errors because they think they can use them in their logic, are really cutting away the substratum of evidentiary argument from under them. The veracity of God has not been accepted by all nations any more than His justice. In many times and countries He has been thought to inspire falsehoods, to put a "lying spirit" in the mouths of men, to deceive them to their destruction. Agamemnon's dream is but the type of a whole class of legends imputing untrue revelations to the gods. If we liked such work, we might prove, perhaps, that there is no man on the earth whose ancestors have not believed the like. And what then? Why, we can only answer that, debased, depraved, imperfect as they may be, these faculties are our all. It is on them that we depend for life, and breath, and all things. We must be-

lieve our heart and conscience, or we shall believe nothing. We *must* believe that God cannot lie, or we must renounce all that our highest and innermost nature most cleaves to; but if we go so far, we must go further—we cannot believe in God's veracity and deny the intuition of His justice—we know that He is pure on the same ground that we know that He is true. If an alleged revelation contradict this justice or this purity, we must at once deny that it can have proceeded from Him.

Even admitting, as we think it must be admitted, that Butler did not firmly hold the principle which Mr. Rogers and others ascribe to him, some may find a difficulty in so great a thinker having even a tendency towards that tenet. On examination, however, the very error seems characteristic of him.

A mind such as Butler's was in a previous page described to be, is very apt to be prone to over-refinement. A thinker of what was there called the picturesque order has a vision, a picture of the natural view of the subject. Those certainties and conclusions, those doubts and difficulties, which occur on the surface, strike him at once; he sees with his mind's eye some conspicuous instance in which all such certainties are realised, and by which all such doubts are suggested. Some great typical fact remains delineated before his mind, and is a perpetual answer to all hypotheses which strive to be over-subtle. But an unimaginative thinker has no such assistance; he has no pictures or instances in his mind; he works by a process like an accountant, and like an accountant he is dependent on the correctness with which he works. He begins with a principle and reasons from it; and if any error have crept into the deduction or into the principle, he has not any means of detecting it. His mind does not yield, as with more fertile fancies, a stock of instances on which to verify

his elaborate conclusions. Accordingly he is apt to say he has explained a difficulty, when in reality he has but refined it away.

Again, there is likewise a deeper sense in which the argument of the *Analogy* is, even in its least valuable portions, characteristic of Butler. On topics so peculiar, the minds most likely to hold right opinions are exactly those most likely to advance wrong arguments in support of them. The opinions themselves are suggested and supported by deep and strong feelings, which it is painful to analyse, and not easy to describe. The real and decisive arguments for those opinions are little save a rational analysis and acute delineation of those feelings. It will necessarily follow that the mind most prone to delineate and analyse that part of itself will be most likely to succeed in the argumentative exposition of these topics; and this is not likely to be the mind which feels those emotions with the greatest intensity. The very keenness of these feelings makes them painful to touch; their depth, difficult to find: constancy, too, is liable to disguise them. The mind which always feels them will, so to speak, be less conscious of them than one which is only visited by them at long and rare intervals. Those who know a place or a person best are not those most likely to describe them best; their knowledge is so familiar that they cannot bring it out in words. A deep, steady under-current of strong feeling is precisely what affects men's highest opinions most, and exactly what prevents men from being able adequately to describe them. In the absence of the delineative faculty, without the power to state their true reasons, minds of this deep and steadfast class are apt to put up with reasons which lie on the surface. They are caught by an appearance of fairness, affect a dry and intellectual tone, endeavour to establish their conclusions without the premises which are necessary,—without mention

of the grounds on which, in their own minds, they really rest. The very heartfelt confidence of Butler in Christianity was perhaps the cause of his seeming in part to support it with considerations which appear to be erroneous.

It seems odd to say, and yet it is true, that the power of the *Analogy* is in its rhetoric. The ancient writers on that art made a distinction between the modes of persuasion which lay in the illustrative and argumentative efficacy of what was said, and a yet more subtle kind which seemed to reside in the manner and disposition of the speaker himself. In the first class, as has been before remarked, no writer of equal eminence is so defective as Butler; his thoughts, if you take each one singly, seem to lose a good deal from the feeble and hesitating manner in which they are stated. And yet, if you read any considerable portion of his writings, you become sensible of a strong disinclination to disagree with him. A strong anxiety first to find the truth, and next to impart it—an evident wish not to push arguments too far—a clear desire not to convince men except by reasonable arguments of true opinions, characterises every feeble word and halting sentence. Nothing is laid down to dazzle or arouse. It is assumed that the reader wants to know what is true, as much as the writer does to tell it. Very possibly this may not be the highest species of religious author. The vehement temperament, the bold assertion, the ecstatic energy of men like St. Augustine or St. Paul, burn, so to speak, into the minds and memories of men, and remain there at once and for ever. Such men excel in the broad statement of great truths which flash at once with vivid evidence on the minds which receive them. The very words seem to glow with life; and even the sceptical reader is half awakened by them to a kindred and similar warmth. Such are the men who move the creeds of mankind, and stamp a likeness of themselves

on ages that succeed them. But there is likewise room for a quieter class, who partially state arguments, elaborate theories, appreciate difficulties, solve doubts; who do not expect to gain a hearing from the many—who do not cry in the streets or lift their voice from the hill of Mars—who address quiet and lonely thinkers like themselves, and are well satisfied if a single sentence in all their writings remove one doubt from the mind of any man. Of these was Butler. *Requiescat in pace*, for it was peace that he loved.

THE IGNORANCE OF MAN.[1]

(1862.)

A BOLD man once said that religion and morality were inconsistent. He argued thus: The essence of religion—part of the essence, at any rate—is recompense; a belief in another life is only another name for the anticipation of a time when wickedness will be punished, and when goodness will be rewarded. If you admit a Providence, you acknowledge the existence of an adjusting agency, of a power which is recompensing by its very definition, and of its very nature, which allots happiness to virtue and pain to vice. On the other hand, the essence of morality is disinterestedness; a man who does good for the sake of a future gain to himself is, in a moral point of view, altogether inferior to one who does good for the good's sake, who hopes for nothing again, who is not thinking of himself, who is not calculating his own futurity. Between a man who does good to the world because he takes an intelligent view of his real interest, and another who does harm to the world because he is blind to that interest, there is only an intellectual difference,—the one is mentally long-sighted, the other mentally short-sighted. By the admission of all mankind, a disinterested action is better than a selfish action; a disinterested man is higher than a selfish man. Yet how is it possible that a religious man can be dis-

[1] *Science in Theology.* Sermons preached before the University of Oxford. By the Rev. Adam S. Farrar. Longmans.

interested? Heaven overarches him, hell yawns before him. How can he help having his eyes attracted by the one and terrified by the other? He boasts, indeed, that religion is useful to mankind by producing good actions; he extols the attractive influence of future reward, and the deterring efficacy of apprehended penalty. But his boast is absurd and premature; by holding forth these anticipated bribes, by menacing these pains, he extracts from virtue *its virtue;* he makes it selfishness like the rest; he constructs an edifying and hoping saint, but he spoils the disinterested and uncalculating man.

These thoughts are not often boldly expressed. Fundamental difficulties rarely are. They constantly confuse the mind, and they are always floating like a vague mist in the intellectual air; they distort and blur the outlines of everything else, but they have no distinct outline of their own. An obscure difficulty is a pervading evil; the first requisite for removing it is to make it clear; if you assign a limit, you notify the frontier at which it may be attacked.

The objection is, in most people's apprehensions, and in its common incomplete expressions, confined exclusively to the doctrine of a future life, but it is at least equally applicable to the belief in a God who rules and governs. We can of course conceive of supernatural beings who do not interfere with us, who do not care for us, who do not help us, who have no connection with our moral life, who do good to no one, who do evil to no one. Such were the gods of Lucretius, the most fascinating of pure inventions; but such gods are not the gods of religion. The ancient Epicurean, in times when obscure difficulties were discussed in plainer words than is now either possible or advisable, expressly defended them on that ground. He did not want his gods to interfere with him; he thought it would impair the ideal languor of their life, as well as the inapprehensive security of his own life.

They lived "self-scanned, self-centred, self-secure,"[1] and he was, in so far as was possible, to do so also. He did not wish the voluptuaries of heaven to become the busybodies of earth. He liked to have a pleasant dream of the upper world, but he did not wish it to descend and rule him. But as soon as we abandon the natural fiction of the voluptuous imagination; as soon as we accept the idea of a God who is a providence in the universe, and not an idol in heaven; as soon as we allow that He loves good and hates evil; as soon as we are sure that He is our Father, and chastises us as children; as soon as we acknowledge a God such as the human heart and conscience crave for, the God of Christianity,—we at once reach the primitive difficulty. Here is a Being who *we know* will reward the good and punish the evil; how can we do good without reference to that supernatural recompense, or evil without shrinking from that apprehended penalty?

Nor is it for this purpose in the least material, though for many other purposes it is very material, whether we consider God as acting by irrevocable laws fixed once for all, or upon a system which (though foreseen and immutable to Him, to whom all the future is as present as all the past) is according to our view of it,—to our translation of it, so to speak, into our limited capacities,—capable of flexibility at His touch, and of modification at His pleasure. If we know that we are rewarded and punished, it matters little, as respects our hope and our apprehension, whether that punishment be inflicted by a machine or by a person; in one case we shall shun the contact with the lacerating wheel, and in the other we shall dread a blow from the punitive hand. But in either case the pain will be the determining motive, the deterring thought. We shall act as we do act, not from a disinterested intention to do our duty, whatever

[1] Matthew Arnold.

be the consequences, but from a sincere wish to get off patent and proximate suffering. The difficulty of reconciling a true morality with a true religion is not confined to that part of religion which relates to the anticipated life of man hereafter, but extends to the very idea of a superintending providence and preadjusting Creator, in whatever mode we conceive that superintendence to be exercised, and that adjustment to have been made.

The answer most commonly given to this difficulty is unquestionably fallacious. It is said that the desire of eternal life for ourselves is a motive far greater and far better than the desire of anything else, either for ourselves or for others. It is not conceived as a form of selfishness at all—at least, not when regarded in this connection, and employed to solve this problem. At other times, indeed, divines are ready enough to twist the argument the other way. They will expand at length the notion that there is a "common-sense" in the Gospel; that it appeals to "business-like motives"; that there is nothing "high-flown" about it; that it aims to persuade sensible men of this world, on sufficient reasons of sound prudence, to sacrifice the present world in order to gain the invisible one; that, whatever sentimentalists may assert, it is reward which incites to achievement, and fear that restrains from misdoing. Sermons are written in consecrated paragraphs, each of which is sufficient to itself, and the connection between which is not intended to be precisely adjusted; each has an edifying tendency, and the writer and the hearer wish for no more. Otherwise it would not be possible, as it often is, to hear religion commended in the same discourse at one time as self-sacrificing, and at another as prudential; to have a eulogium on disinterestedness in the exordium, and an appeal to selfishness at the conclusion. A mode of composition which less dis-

guised the true ideas of the composer, would show that many divines really believe a desire for a long pleasure in heaven, to be not only more longsighted and sensible, but intrinsically higher, nobler, and better than a desire for a short happiness on earth. Yet, when stated in short sentences and plain English, the idea is palpably absurd. The "wish to come into a good thing" is of the same ethical order, whether the good thing be celestial or be terrestrial, be distinctly future, or be close at hand.

A second mode of solving the difficulty, though more ingenious, and in every way far better, is erroneous also. It is said "men generally act from mixed motives, and they do so in this case. They are partly disinterested, and partly not disinterested. They are desirous of doing good because it is good, and they are desirous also of having the reward of goodness hereafter. They wish at the very same time to benefit their neighbour in this world, and also to benefit themselves in the world to come." The reply is ingenious, but it overlooks the point of the difficulty; it mistakes the nature of mixed motives. The constitution of man is such that if you strengthen one or two co-operating motives you weaken, other things being equal, the force of the other; the lesser impulse tends always to be absorbed in the stronger, and it may pass entirely out of thought if the stronger is strengthened, if the greater become more prominent. We see this in common life; it is undoubtedly possible for a statesman to act at the same moment both from the love of office and from the love of his country; from a wish to prolong his power and a wish to benefit his nation. But strengthen one of these motives, and, *cæteris paribus*, you weaken the other. Make the statesman love office more, you thereby make him love his country less; he will be readier to sacrifice what he will call a "vague theory and an impracticable purpose" for

the sake of the power which he loves; he will cease to care to do what he ought, from a wish to retain the capacity of doing something. Or, suppose a further case: there have been many times and countries where the loss of office was equivalent to the loss of liberty, perhaps to that of life. In one age of English history, one great historian says, "There was but a single step from the throne to the scaffold". In another age, another great historian says, "It was as dangerous to be leader of opposition as to be a highwayman".[1] The possessors of power in those times, upon principle, destroyed or endeavoured to destroy their predecessors. Such a prospect would induce a statesman to love office for its own sake. It would absorb the whole of his attention; he could hardly be asked to think of his country. Extraordinary men would do so, but ordinary men would be overwhelmed by the "violent motive" of personal fear; they would only be thinking of themselves even when they were doing what in truth and fact was beneficial to their country.

The case is similar to the "violent motive," as Paley calls it,[2] of religion, when presented in the same manner in which Paley presents it. If you could extend before men the awful vision of everlasting perdition, if they could see it as they see the things on earth—as they see Fleet Street and St. Paul's; if you could show men likewise the inciting vision of an everlasting heaven, if they could see that too with undeniable certainty and invincible distinctness,—who could say that they would have a thought for any other motive? The personal incentive to good action, and the personal dissuasion from bad action, would absorb all other considerations, whether deterrent or persuasive. We could no more break a divine law than we could commit

[1] Macaulay: "Essay on Sir James Mackintosh's History".
[2] *Moral Philosophy*, book ii., chaps. ii., iii.

a murder in the open street. The fact that men act from mixed motives is no explanation of the great difficulty with which we started; for the precise peculiarity of that difficulty is to raise one of those mixed motives to an intensity which seems likely to absorb, extinguish, and annihilate the other.

The true explanation is precisely the reverse. The moral part of religion—the belief in a moral state hereafter, dependent for its nature on our goodness or our wickedness, the belief in a moral Providence, who apportions good to good, and evil to evil—does not annihilate the sense of the inherent nature of good and evil because it is itself the result of that sense. Our only ground for accepting an ethical and retributive religion is the inward consciousness that virtue being virtue must prosper, that vice being vice must fail. From these axioms we infer, not logically, but practically, that there is a continuous eternity, in which what we expect will be seen, that there is a Providence who will apportion what is good, and punish what is evil. Of the mode in which we do so we will speak presently more at length; but granting that this description of our religion is true, it undeniably solves our difficulty. Our religion cannot by possibility swallow up morality because it is dependent for its origin—for its continuance—on that morality.

Suppose a person, say in a prison, to have no knowledge by the senses that there was such a thing as human law; suppose that he never saw either the judicial or the executive authorities, and that no one ever told him of their existence; suppose that by a consciousness of the inherent nature of good and evil, the fact that such an institution *must* exist should dawn upon his mind,—of course it would not, but imagine that it should,—it is absurd to suppose that he would feel his power of doing what is right *because* it is

right diminished. When he goes out into the world, when he hears his judge, when he sees the policeman, when he surveys the intrusive, the incessant, the pervading moral apparatus of human society,—*then* he would be able to disregard and to forget what is due to intrinsic goodness and what is to be feared from intrinsic evil. No one will or can say that he now abstains from stealing oranges under a policeman's eyes from any motive, good or bad, save fear of the policeman; that motive is so evident, so pressing, so irresistible, that it becomes the only motive. But if he only thought the policeman *must* exist because he believed stealing oranges to be wrong, he would feel it quite possible to abstain from stealing oranges out of pure and unselfish considerations.

Assume that a person only knows a particular fact from a certain informant, and suppose that on a sudden he doubts that informant, of course his confidence in the communicated fact ceases, or is diminished. So, *if* all our knowledge of the religious part of morality be derived from the intrinsic impression of morality, as soon as we question the accuracy of the informant, that instant we must be dubious of the information. The derivative cannot be stronger than the original; cannot overpower it; must grow when it grows, and wane when it wanes.

But is our knowledge of the moral part of religion thus derivative and dependent? Two classes of disputants will deny it entirely: one class will say they derive their knowledge from Natural Theology; another will say they derive it from Revelation; and until the arguments of both classes are examined, the subject must remain in partial darkness. Natural theology is the simplest of theologies; it contains only a single argument, and establishes but one conclusion. Observing persons have gone to and fro through the earth, and they have accumulated a million illustrations of a single

analogy. They have accumulated indications of design from all parts of the universe. They have not, indeed, shown that *matter* was created; the substance of matter, if there be a substance, shows no structure, no evidence of design: according to all common belief, according to the admission of such scientific men as admit its existence, that matter is unorganised. By its nature it is a raw material; it is that to which manufacture, manipulation, design—call it what you like—is to be applied; necessarily therefore it shows no indication of design itself. The reasoners from the workmanship of man to that of God must always fail in this: man only adapts what he finds: God creates what He uses. But within its legitimate limits the argument from design has been most effectual for two thousand years. On a certain class of purely intellectual minds, who think more than they live, who reason more than they imagine, it has produced the strongest and most vivid conception of God which, with their experience, and their mental limitation, they are capable of receiving. It has shown that *out of the causes we know*, none is so likely to have worked up the substance of matter into its present form as a designing and powerful mind. *Subject to this assumption*, it shows that this mind intended to erect that mixed, composite, involved human society which we see. These theologians prove, for example, that man has a structure of body which enables him to be what he is, which prevents his being in appearance, and in most real particularities, different from what he is. They show that the physical world is constructed so as to enable man to be what he is, and to show what he is, so as to limit his power of being greatly different, or of seeming so. They show, in fact, that, if the expression be allowed, we live, as far as *they* can tell us, in a factory, the builder of which projected certain results, contrived certain large plans, devised certain

particular machines, foresaw certain functions, which he meant for us, which he made our interest, which he gave us wages to perform. They show not, indeed, that an omnipotent Being created the universe, but that an able being has been (so to say) about it. They do not demonstrate that an infinite Being created all things, but they *do* show, and show so that the mass of ordinary men will comprehend and believe it, that a large mind has been concerned in manufacturing most things.

But these results do not constitute the interior essence; scarcely, indeed, begin the exterior outwork of a substantial religion. They touch neither that part of it which moves men's hearts, nor that part which occasions our primary difficulty. They do not show us an eternal state of man hereafter, in which the anomalies of this world may be rectified and recompensed; they do not show us an infinite Perfection, distributing just reward with an omniscient accuracy, according to a perfect law. It is not, indeed, to be expected that natural philosophy should prove the immortality of man, since it does not prove the immortality of God. It shows that an artful and able designer has been concerned in the construction of the strange existing world; but may it not have been the last work of the great artist? There is nothing in contriving skill to evince immortality; nothing to prove that the "great artificer" has always been or is always going to be. Of his moral views we collect from natural theology as much as this. There are certain laws of the physical universe which cannot be broken without pain, which avenge themselves on those who overlook, neglect, or violate them. These were presumedly designed (according to the moral assumption of natural theology) for the end which they effect; they were doubtless meant to accomplish that which they conspicuously do. On a disregard of such laws, natural theology shows that the

Providence of which it speaks has imposed a penalty; the *contriving* God (so to speak, for it is necessary to speak plainly) is opposed to recklessness. He does not wish His devices to be impaired or His plans neglected. Every animal has in natural theology, if not a mission, at least a function. There are certain results which a polyp must produce or die; certain others which a horse must effect, or it will be first in pain and then die too; certain other and more complex results which man must produce, or he also will suffer and perish. But recklessness is only a single form of vice: a watchful, heedful selfishness is another form. For the latter, there is no indication in natural theology of any divine disapprobation, or of any impending penalty. A heedful being contriving for himself, living in the framework of, adjusting himself with nice discernment and careful discretion to, the laws of the visible world, incurs no censure from the theology of design. On the contrary, he could justly say he had done what was required of him. He had studiously observed, he could say, the rules of the factory in which he lived; he had finished his own work; he had not hindered any others from accomplishing theirs; he had complied with the arrangements of the establishment: natural theology seems to require no more. Self-absorbed foresight and contriving discretion may not be great virtues according to a high morality, or according to a true religion; but they are profitable in the visible world. They are the virtues of men skilful in what they see. Accordingly, they suit a theology which is exclusively based upon an analysis of the visible world, which computes physical profits and sensible results, which aims to show that Providence is prudent, that God is wise in His generation.

Natural theology, therefore, contains nothing to disturb the explanation we have given of our original difficulty.

The most cursory examination of it would show as much. We have only to open the well-known volumes in which the munificence of a former generation has embalmed the most striking arguments of a theology which that generation valued at more than it is worth. We find there pictures of a bat's wing, of the human hand, of a calf's eye; and we are told how ingenious, how clever, so to say—for it is the true word—these contrivances are. But no one could learn, or expect to learn, from a calf's eye, that the Creator is pure, just, merciful; that He is eternal or omnipotent; that He rewards good, and punishes evil. Throughout all the physical world He sends rain upon the just and the unjust; and no refined analysis of that world will detect in it a preference of the former to the latter. As it is with the moral holiness of God, so it is with the immortality of man: no one could expect to discover by a minute inspection of the perishable body, what was the fate of the imperceptible soul. Physical science may examine the structure of the brain, but it cannot foresee the fortunes of the mind.

What, then, of Revelation? Does this informant disturb the solution of our problem? The change from the world of natural theology to that of any revelation is most striking. The most impressive characteristic of natural theology is its bareness. It accumulates facts and proves little; it has voluminous evidences and a short creed. Accordingly, the reason why it does not disturb our philosophy is that its communications are insufficient. It does not impart to us *such* a knowledge of a divine rewarder and punisher, of future human punishment and future human reward, as would render it impossible to be disinterested and hardly possible not to be foreseeing and selfish, because it communicates *no* knowledge on the subject. It does not teach the divine characteristic which involves the difficulty; it does not tell, either, that part of man's future fate which

involves it likewise. With revelation it is far otherwise. That informant is precise, full and clear. It tells us plainly what God is; it warns us what may happen, and easily happen, to ourselves. We learn from it that God is the divine ruler; we learn from it that we are punishable creatures, whose fate depends on ourselves. The observations which have been justly made on natural theology are here entirely inapplicable. We have passed from a *vacuum* into a *plenum.*

The real reason why revealed religion does not invalidate our pre-existing moral nature, is because it is itself dependent on that nature. When we examine the evidence for revelation we alight at once on a great and fundamental postulate; we assume that God is veracious; we are so familiar with this great truth, that we hardly think of it save as an axiom; both the readers of the treatises on the evidences and the writers of them pass rapidly and easily over it. But, putting aside for a moment the evidence of our inner consciousness, and regarding the subject with the pure intellect and bare eyes, the assumption is an audacious one. How do we know that it is true? We have proved by natural theology that a designing Being, of great power, considerable age, ingenious habits, and benevolent motives, somewhere exists; but how do we know that Being to be "veracious"? We see that among human beings, the class of intellectual beings of whom we know most, and whom we can observe best, veracity is a rare virtue. We know that some nations seem wholly destitute of it, and that one sex in all countries is deficient in it. We know that a human being may have great power, and not tell the truth; ingenious habits, and not tell the truth; kind intentions, and not tell the truth. Why may not a superhuman Being be constituted in the same way, possess a character similarly mixed, be remarkable not only for morals similar

to man's, but also for defects analogous to his? Our inner nature revolts at the supposition; but we are not now concerned with our inner nature; we have, for the sake of distinctness, abstracted and left it on one side. We are dealing now not with the evidence of the heart, but with the evidence of the eyes; we are discussing not what really is, but what would seem to be—what is all we could know to be, if we had only five senses and a reasoning understanding. From these informants, how could we know enough of the ingenious unknown Being, who is so useful in the world, as to be confident He would tell us the truth in every case? How could we presume to guess His unexperienced speech, His latent motives, His imperceptible character? Our knowledge of the moral part of the Divine character, of His veracity—as well as of His justice—comes from our own moral nature. We feel that God is holy, just as we feel that holiness *is* holiness; just as we know by internal consciousness that goodness is good in itself, and by itself; just as we know that God in Himself is pure and holy. We feel that God is true, for veracity is a part of holiness and a condition of purity. But if we did not think holiness to be excellent in itself, if we did not feel it to be a motive unaffected by consequences and independent of calculation, our belief in the Divine holiness would fade away, and with it would fade our belief in the Divine veracity also.

Revelation, therefore, cannot undermine the very principle upon which it is itself dependent. Our notion of the character of God being revealed to us by our moral nature, cannot impair or weaken the conclusion of that nature. This is the meaning of the profound saying of Coleridge, that "*all* religion is revealed".[1] He meant that all knowledge of God's character which is worth naming or regarding,

[1] *Aids to Reflection*, sub-head, "Aphorisms on that which is indeed Spiritual Religion," comment on Aphorism vii. (Forrest Morgan.)

which excites any portion of the religious sentiment, which excites our love, our awe, or our fear, is communicated to us by our internal nature, by that spirit within us which is open to a higher world, by that spirit which is in some sense God's Spirit. True religion of this sort does not impair the moral spirit which revealed it; it does not dare do so, for it knows that spirit to be its only evidence.

But all religion is not true. A superstitious mind permits a certain aspect of God's character, say its justice, to obtain an exclusive hold on it, to tyrannise over it, to absorb it. The soul becomes bound down by the weight of its own revelation. Conscience is overshadowed, weakened, and almost destroyed by the very idea which is originally suggested, and of which it is really the only reliable informant. Such minds are incapable of true virtue. The essential opposition which is alleged to exist between morality and *all* religion does exist between morality and *their* religion. They have a selfish fear of the future, which destroys their disinterestedness, and almost destroys their manhood.

The same effect is undeniably produced on many minds —not necessarily produced, but in fact produced—by a belief in revelation. They are fearful of future punishment, because some being in the air has threatened it. They have not the true belief in the Divine holiness which arises from a love of holiness; they have not the true conception of God which was suggested by conscience, and is kept alive by the activity of conscience; but they have a vague persuasion that a great Personage has asserted this, and why they should believe that Personage they do not ask or know. While revelation remains connected in the mind with the spirituality on which it is based, it is as consistent with true morality as religion of any other sort; but if disconnected

from that spirituality, if it has become an isolated terrific tenet, like any other superstition, it is inconsistent.

The original difficulty with which we started, and the true answer to that difficulty, may be summed up thus: The objection is, that the extrinsic motive to goodness (which religion reveals) must absorb the intrinsic motives to goodness (which morality reveals). The answer is, that the second revelation is contingent upon the first; that those only have a substantial ground for believing the extrinsic motive who retain a lively confidence in the intrinsic. Perhaps some may think this principle too plain; perhaps others may think it too unimportant to justify so long an exposition and such a strenuous inculcation. But if we dwell upon it and trace it to its attendant results and consequences, we shall find that it will account for more of the world than almost any other single principle—at any rate, will explain much which puzzles us, and much which is important to us.

First, this principle will explain to us the use and the necessity of what we may call the *screen* of the physical world. Every one who has religious ideas must have been puzzled by what we may call the irrelevancy of creation to his religion. We find ourselves lodged in a vast theatre, in which a ceaseless action, a perpetual shifting of scenes, an unresting life, is going forward; and that life seems physical, unmoral, having no relation to what our souls tell us to be great and good, to what religion says is the design of all things. Especially when we see any new objects, or scenes, or countries, we feel this. Look at a great tropical plant, with large leaves stretching everywhere, and great stalks branching out on all sides; with a big beetle on a leaf, and a humming-bird on a branch, and an ugly lizard just below. What has such an object to do with *us*—with anything we can conceive, or hope, or imagine? What

could it be created for, if creation has a moral end and object? Or go into a gravel-pit, or stone-quarry; you see there a vast accumulation of dull matter, yellow or grey, and you ask, involuntarily and of necessity, why is all this waste and irrelevant production, as it would seem, of material? Can anything seem more stupid than a big stone *as* a big stone, than gravel for gravel's sake? What is the use of such cumbrous, inexpressive objects in a world where there are minds to be filled, and imaginations to be aroused, and souls to be saved? A clever sceptic once said on reading Paley that *he* thought the universe was a furniture warehouse for unknown beings; he assented to the indications of design visible in many places, but what the end of most objects was, why *such* things were, what was the ultimate object contemplated by the whole, he could not understand. He thought "divines are right in saying that much of the universe has an expression, but surely sceptics are right in saying that as much or more has no expression". Some of the world seems designed to show a little of God; but much more seems also designed to hide Him and keep Him off. The reply is, that if morality is to be disinterested, some such irrelevant universe is essential. Life, moral life, the life of tempted beings capable of virtue and liable to vice, of necessity involves a theatre of some sort; it could not be carried on in a vast vacuum; *some* means of communication between mind and mind, *some* external motive to question inward impulses, *some* outward events as the result of past action and the stimulus to new action, seem essential to the life of a voluntary moral being, to a being tempted as a man is, living as a man lives. The only admissible question is the nature of that theatre. Is it to be in all its parts and objects expressive of God's character and communicative of man's fate? or is it, as many say, in most parts to express nothing and tell nothing? The reply

is, that *if* the universe were to be incessantly expressive and incessantly communicative, morality would be impossible; we should live under the unceasing pressure of a supernatural interference, which would give us selfish motives for doing everything, which would menace us with supernatural punishment if we left anything undone. We should be living in a *chastising* machine, of which the secret would be patent and the penalties apparent. We are startled to find a universe we did not expect. But if we lived in the universe we did expect, the life which we lead, and were meant to lead, would be impossible. We should expect a punitive world sanctioning moral laws, and the perpetual punishment of those laws would be so glaringly apparent that true virtue would become impossible. An "unfeeling Nature,"[1] an unmoral universe, a sun that shines and a rain which falls equally on the evil and on the good, are essential to morality in a being free like man, and created as man was. A miscellaneous world is a suitable theatre for a single-minded life, and, so far as we can see, the only one.

The same sort of reasoning partly elucidates, even if it does not explain, the brevity of our apparent life. If visible life were eternal, future punishments must be visible. We should meet in our streets with old, old men enduring the consequences of offences which happened before we were born. We should not see, perhaps, old age as we now see it; decrepitude would be unknown to us. If there was immortal life on earth, there would probably also be immortal youth; at any rate, immortal activity. The perpetuity of existence would not be divided from the perpetuity of what makes life desirable, of what makes effective life possible. But if children saw their fathers, and their fathers' fathers, and their fathers' ancestors, in an unending chain, suffering penalties for certain acts, and obtaining

[1] Goethe: "The Godlike" (short poem).

rewards for certain deeds, how is it possible that they could act otherwise than according to those visible and evident examples? The consecutive tradition of self-interest would be so strong among a perpetual race of immortal men that disinterested virtue would be not so much impracticable as unthought-of and unknown. The exact line of real self-benefit would be chalked out so plainly, so conspicuously, so glaringly, that no other action would be conceivable, or possible. The evidence of *all* consequences would be like the evidences of legal consequences now, only infinitely more effective and infinitely more perceptible. In human law, the *detection* of the offence by man is a pre-requisite of all punishment by man. An offence not proved to the "satisfaction of the court" escapes the judgment of the court. But in a visible immortal life, this pre-requisite would not be needful. *If* there be a future punishment, and *if* man lived for all futurity upon earth, that future punishment would be on earth, and it would be inflicted by God. Undetected crime, that general bad character without specific proved offence, which now mocks all law and laughs at visible punishment, would then, under our very eyes, receive that punishment. Job's friends kindly argued with him, "You are suffering, therefore you are guilty". And the argument was bad, because they only saw an exceptional accident in the life of a good man, not his entire life through a subsequent eternity; but if that eternal life had been passed in continuous residence on this globe, if notorious bad fortune had pursued him through eternity in the nineteenth generation, his descendants might well have said, "Oh, Job, there is something wrong in you, for you never come out right". A great historian has observed,—

"That honesty is the best policy, is a maxim which we firmly believe to be generally correct, even with respect to the temporal interest of individuals; but with respect to societies, the rule is subject to still

fewer exceptions, and that for this reason, that the life of societies is larger than that of individuals. It is possible to mention men who have owed great worldly prosperity to breaches of private faith; but we doubt whether it be possible to mention a state which has, on the whole, been a gainer by a breach of public faith."[1]

If the visible life of individuals were yet longer than the life of societies, the rule would be subject to still fewer exceptions; if that visible life were eternal, the rule would be subject to no exceptions; the staring evidence of conspicuous results would purge temptation out of the world.

The physical world now rewards what we may call the physical virtues, and punishes what we may call the physical vices. There is a certain state of the body which is a condition of physical well-being, and (as life is constituted) very much of all well-being. If by gross excess any man should impair that condition, physical law will punish him. The body is our schoolmaster to bring us to the soul; it enforces on us the preparatory merits, it scourges out of us the preparatory defects. The law of human government is similar; it enforces on us that adherence to obvious virtue, and that avoidance of obvious vice, which are the essential preliminaries of real virtue. There is no true virtue or vice, so long as physical law and human law are what they are in any such matters. The dread of the penalties is too powerful not to extinguish (speaking generally, and peculiar cases excepted) all other motives. But these teachers strengthen the mental instruments of real virtue. They strengthen our will; they hurt our vanity; they confirm our manhood. Physical law and human law train and build up, if the expression may be permitted, that good pagan, that sound-bodied, moderate, careful creature, out of which a good Christian may, if he will and by God's help, in the end be constructed. If visible

[1] Macaulay: "Essay on Lord Clive".

life were eternal instead of temporary, the same intense discipline which so usefully creates the preparatory prerequisites would likewise efface the possibility of disinterested virtue.

Again, the great scene of human life may be explained, or at least illustrated, in like manner: *we are souls in the disguise of animals.* We lead a life in great part neither good nor evil, neither wicked nor excellent. The larger number of men seem to an outside observer to walk through life in a torpid sort of sleep. They are decent in their morals, respectable in their manners, stupid in their conversation. The incentives of their life are outward; its penalties are outward too. The life of such people seems to some men always—to many men at times—inexplicable. But if such beings were not permitted in the world, perhaps a higher life might be impossible for any beings. They act like a living screen, just as we say matter acts like a dead screen. It is not desirable that the results of goodness should be distinctly apparent; and if all human life were intensely and exclusively moral; if all men were with all their strength pursuing good or pursuing evil, the isolated consequences of that isolated principle must be apparent; at least, could scarcely fail to be so. If one set of men were cooped up in the exclusive pursuit of virtue, and were very ardent and warm about it, and another set of men were eager in the pursuit of evil, and cared for nothing but evil, the world would fall asunder into two dissimilar halves. If goodness in the visible world had *any*, the least, tendency to produce visible happiness, then incessant goodness would be very happy. The accumulations of the slight tendency by perpetual renewal would amount of necessity to a vast sum-total. Incessant badness would produce awful misery. Those absorbed in vice would be warnings dangerous to disinterestedness; those absorbed in virtue, attractions and

examples almost more dangerous. The mischief is prevented by those *unabsorbed*, purposeless, divided characters which seem to puzzle us. They complicate human life, and they do so the more effectually that they typify and represent so much of what every man feels and must feel within himself. In each man there is so much which is unmoral, so much which comes from an unknown origin, and passes forward to an unknown destination, which is of the earth, earthy; which has nothing to do with hell or heaven; which occupies a middle place not recognised in any theology; which is hateful both to the impetuous "friends of God" and His most eager enemies. This pervading and potent element involves life as it were in confusion and hurry. We do not see distinctly whither we are going. Disinterestedness is possible, for calculation is confused. Doubtless, even on earth virtue of all kinds eventually must have, on a large average of cases, some slight tendency to produce happiness. This earth is an extract from the moral universe —partakes its nature. But that tendency is too slight to be a considerable motive to high action; it would not be discovered but for the inward principle which sets us to look for it; and even when we find it, it is transient, and small, and dubious. It is lost in the vast results of the unmoral universe, in the vague shows, the multiform spectacle of human life.

Again, we may understand why the convictions of what duty is, and what religion is, vary so much and so often among men. If all our convictions on these points, on these infinitely important points, were identical and alike, an accumulated public opinion would oppress us, would destroy the freedom of our action and the purity of our virtue. If every one said that certain penalties would be the consequence of certain actions, we should believe that the consequences would be so and so, not because we felt those

actions to be intrinsically bad, but because we were told that such would be the consequences. We should believe upon report, and a vague impression would haunt us, not produced by our own conscience, or our own sense of right and wrong, and would impair both our manhood and our virtue. The extraordinary discrepancies of believed religion and believed morality have weighed on many and will weigh on many; but they have this use—they enable men to be disinterested. As there is no sanctioned invincible firm custom, there are no customary penalties, there is nothing men must shun; as the world has not made up its mind, there is no executioner of the world ready to enforce that mind upon every one.

Lastly, the same essential argument may be applied to a problem yet more delicate and difficult, to one which it is difficult to treat in reviewer's phraseology. Why is God so far from us? is the agonising question which has depressed so many hearts, so long as we know there were hearts, has puzzled so many intellects since intellects began to puzzle themselves. But the moral part of God's character could not be shown to us with sensible conspicuous evidence; it could not be shown to us as Fleet Street is shown to us, without impairing the first pre-requisite of disinterestedness, and the primary condition of man's virtue. And if the moral aspect of God's character must of necessity be somewhat hidden from us, other aspects of it must be equally hidden. An infinite Being may be viewed under innumerable aspects. God has many qualities in His essence which the word "moral" does not exhaust, which it does not even hint at. Perhaps this essay has seemed to read too sternly; as if the moral side of the Divine character, which is and must be to imperfect beings in some sense a terrible side,—as if the moral side of human life, which must be to mankind not always a pleasant side,

—had been forced into an exclusive prominence which of right did not belong to it. But the *attractive* aspects of God's character must not be made more apparent to such a being as man than His chastening and severer aspects. We must not be invited to approach the Holy of Holies without being made aware, painfully aware, what Holiness is. We must know our own unworthiness ere we are fit to approach or imagine an Infinite Perfection. The most nauseous of false religions is that which affects a fulsome fondness for a Being not to be thought of without awe, or spoken of without reluctance.

On the whole, therefore, the necessary ignorance of man explains to us much; it shows us that we could not be what we ought to be, if we lived in the sort of universe we should expect. It shows us that a latent Providence, a confused life, an odd material world, an existence broken short in the midst and on a sudden, are not real difficulties, but real helps; that they, or something like them, are essential conditions of a moral life to a subordinate being. If we steadily remember that we only know the ultimate fate, the extrinsic consequences of vice and virtue, because we know of their inherent nature and intrinsic qualities, and that any other evidence of the first would destroy the possibility of the second, *then* much which used to puzzle us may become clear to us.

But it may be said, What sort of evidence is this on which you base the future moral life of man, and the present existence of a moral Providence? Is it not impalpable? It is so, and necessarily so. If a consecutive logical deduction, such as has often been sought between an immutable morality and a true religion, could in fact be found, we should be again met with our fundamental difficulty, though in a disguised and secondary form. Morality might fall out of sight because religion was

obtruded upon us. Morality would be the axiom, religion the deduction; and as a geometer does not keep Euclid's axioms in his head when he is employed upon conic sections, as a student of the differential calculus may half forget the commencement of algebra,—so the great truths of religion, if rigorously and mathematically deduced from the beginnings of morality, might overshadow and destroy those "beggarly elements". No one who has proved important doctrines by rigorous reasoning always retains in his mind the primitive principles from which he set out. As the concrete deductions advance, the primary abstractions recede. Happily, the connection between morality and religion is of a very different kind. Religion (in its moral part) is a secondary impression, produced and kept alive by the first impression of morality. The intensity of the second feeling depends on the continued intensity of the first feeling.

The highest part of human belief is based upon certain developable instincts. Not the most important, but the most obvious of these, is the instinct of beauty. Since the commencement of speculation, ingenious thinkers, who delight in difficulties, have rejoiced to draw out at length the difficulties of the subject. It is said, How can you be certain that there is such an attribute as beauty, when no one is sure what it is, or to what it should be applied? A barbarian thinks one thing charming, the Greek another. Modern nations have a standard different most materially from the ancient standard — founded upon it in several important respects, no doubt, but differing from it in others as important, and almost equally striking. Even within the limits of modern nations this standard differs. The taste of the vulgar is one thing, the taste of the refined and cultivated is altogether at variance with it. The mass of mankind prefer a gaudy modern daub to a faded

picture by Sir Joshua, or to the cartoons of Raphael. What certainty, the sceptic triumphantly asks, can there be in matters on which people differ so much, on which it seems so impossible to argue; which seem to depend on causes and relations simply personal; which are susceptible of no positive test or ascertained criterion? You talk of impalpability, he adds; here it is in perfection. But these recondite doubts impose on no one. Not a single educated person would sleep less soundly if he were told that his life depended on the correctness of his notion that the cartoons of Raphael are more sublime and beautiful than a common daub. He cannot prove it, and he cannot prove that Charles the First was beheaded; but he is quite as certain of one as of the other. This is an instance of an obvious, unmistakable instinct, which does produce effectual belief, though sceptics explain to us that it should not.

The nature of this instinct differs altogether from that of those intuitive and universal axioms which are borne in infallibly upon all the human race, in every age and every place. It is not like the assertion that "two straight lines cannot enclose a space," or the truth that two and two make four. These are believed by every one, and no one can dream of not believing them. But half of mankind would reject the idea that the cartoons were in any sense admirable; they would prefer the overgrown enormities of West, which are side by side with them. The characteristic peculiarity of this instinct is, not that it is irresistible, but that it is *developable*. The higher students of the subject, the more cultivated, meditate upon it, acquire a new sense, which conveys truth to them, though others are ignorant of it, and though they themselves cannot impart it to those others. The appeal is not to the many, as with axioms of Euclid, but to those few—the exceptional few—at whom the many scoff.

The case is similar with the yet higher instincts of morality and of religion. It is idle to pretend that much of them can be found among bloody savages, or simple and remote islanders, or a degraded populace. It is still idler to fancy that because they cannot be discovered there full-grown, and complete, and paramount, there is no evidence for them, and no basis for relying upon them. They resemble the instinct of beauty precisely. The evidence of the few —of the small, high-minded minority, who are the exception of ages, and the salt of the earth—outweighs the evidence of countless myriads who live as their fathers lived, think as they thought, die as they died; who would have lived and died in the very contrary impressions, if by chance they had inherited these instead of the others. The criterion of true beauty is with those (and they are not many) who have a sense of true beauty; the criterion of true morality is with those who have a sense of true morality; the criterion of true religion is with those who have a sense of true religion.

Nor can this defect of an absolute criterion throw the world into confusion. We see it does not, and there was no reason to expect it would. We all of us feel an analogous fluctuation and variation in ourselves. We all of us feel that there are times in which first principles seem borne in upon us by evidence as bright as noonday, and that there are also times in which that evidence is much less, in which it seems to fade away, in which we reckon up the number of persons who differ from us, who reject our principles; times at which we ask, Who are *we*, that we should be right and other men wrong? The unbelieving moods of each mind are as certain as the unbelieving state of much of the world. But no sound mind permits itself to be permanently disturbed, though it may be transiently distracted, by these variations in its own state. We have a *criterion* faculty

within us, which tells us which are lower moods and which are higher. This faculty is a phase of conscience, and if at its bidding we struggle *with* the good moods, and *against* the bad moods, we shall find that great beliefs remain, and that mean beliefs pass away.

There is an analogous phenomenon in the history of the world. Beliefs altogether differ at the base of society, but they agree, or tend to agree, at its summit. As society goes on, the standard of beauty, and of morality, and of religion also, tends to become fixed. The creeds of the higher classes throughout the world, though far from identical in these respects, are not entirely unlike, approach to similarity, approach to it more and more as cultivation augments, goodness improves, and disturbing agencies fall aside.

> "The Ethiop gods have Ethiop lips,
> Bronze cheeks, and woolly hair;
> The Grecian gods are like the Greeks,
> As keen-eyed, cold, and fair."

Such is the various and miscellaneous religion of barbarism; but the religion and the morality of all the best among all nations tend more and more to be the same with "the progress of the suns," and as society itself improves.

The instincts of morality and religion, though we have called them two for facility of speech, run into one another, and in practical human nature are not easily separated. The distinction, like so many others in mental philosophy, is not drawn where accurate science would have directed, but where the first notions of mankind, and the necessity of easy speaking, in a language shaped according to those notions, have suggested. In a refined analysis, the instinct of religion, as we have called it, is a complex aggregate of various instincts, not a single and homogeneous one. But to analyse these, or even to name them, would be far from

our purpose now. Our business is with the relation between the instinct of morality and that of religion, and with no other perplexities or difficulties. The instinct of morality is the basis, and the instinct of moral religion is based upon it, and arises out of it. We feel first the intrinsic qualities of good actions and bad actions; then, as the Greek proverb expressed it, "Where there is shame there is fear"; we expect consequences apportioned to our actions, good and evil; lastly, for within the limits of purely moral ideas there is no higher stage, we rise to the conception of Him who in His wisdom adjusts and allots those far-off consequences to those conspicuous actions. The higher instinct is based on the lower; would fade in the mind should the lower fade. The coalescence of instinct effects what no other contrivance known to us could effect; it enables us to be disinterested, although we know the consequences of evil actions, because conscience is the revealing sensation, and we only know those consequences so long as we are disinterested.

These fundamental difficulties of life and morals are little discussed. Few think of them clearly, and still fewer speak of them much. But they cloud the brain and confuse the hopes of many who never stated them explicitly to themselves, and never heard them stated explicitly by others. Meanwhile superficial difficulties are in every one's mouth; we are deafened with controversies on remote matters which do not concern us; we are confused with "Aids to Faith" which neither harm nor help us. A tumult of irrelevant theology is in the air which oppresses men's heads, and darkens their future, and scatters their hopes. For such a calamity there is no thorough cure; it belongs to the confused epoch of an age of transition, and is inseparable from it. But the best palliative is a steady attention to primary difficulties—if possible, a clear mastery over them; if not, a

distinct knowledge how we stand respecting them. The shrewdest man of the world who ever lived tells us, "That he who begins in certainties shall end in doubts; but he who begins in doubts shall end in certainties;"[1] and the maxim is even more applicable to matters which are not of this world than to those which are.

1 Bacon: *Advancement of Learning*, book i. (page 52, Bohn).

ON THE EMOTION OF CONVICTION.

(1871.)

What we commonly term Belief includes, I apprehend, both an Intellectual and an Emotional element; the first we more properly call "assent," and the second "conviction". The laws of the Intellectual element in belief are "the laws of evidence," and have been elaborately discussed; but those of the Emotional part have hardly been discussed at all—indeed, its existence has been scarcely perceived.

In the mind of a rigorously trained inquirer, the process of believing is, I apprehend, this: First comes the investigation, a set of facts are sifted and a set of arguments weighed; then the intellect perceives the result of those arguments, and, we say, assents to it. Then an emotion more or less strong sets in, which completes the whole. In calm and quiet minds, the intellectual part of this process is so much the strongest that they are hardly conscious of anything else; and as these quiet, careful people have written our treatises, we do not find it explained in them how important the emotional part is.

But take the case of the Caliph Omar, according to Gibbon's description of him. He burnt the Alexandrine Library, saying: "All books which contain what is not in the Koran are dangerous; all those which contain what is in the Koran are useless". Probably no one ever had an intenser belief in anything than Omar had in this. Yet it is impossible to imagine it preceded by an argument. His

belief in Mahomet, in the Koran, and in the sufficiency of the Koran, came to him probably in spontaneous rushes of emotion; there may have been little vestiges of argument floating here and there, but they did not justify the strength of the emotion, still less did they create it, and they hardly even excused it.

There is so commonly some considerable argument for our modern beliefs, that it is difficult now-a-days to isolate the emotional element, and therefore, on the principle that in Metaphysics "egotism is the truest modesty," I may give myself as an example of utterly irrational conviction. Some years ago I stood for a borough in the West of England, and after a keen contest was defeated by seven. Almost directly afterwards there was accidentally another election, and, as I would not stand, another candidate of my own side was elected, and I of course ceased to have any hold upon the place, or chance of being elected there. But for years I had the deepest conviction that I should be Member for "Bridgwater"; and no amount of reasoning would get it out of my head. The borough is now disfranchised; but even still, if I allow my mind to dwell on the contest,—if I think of the hours I was ahead in the morning, and the rush of votes at two o'clock by which I was defeated,—and even more, if I call up the image of the nomination day, with all the people's hands outstretched, and all their excited faces looking the more different on account of their identity in posture, the old feeling almost comes back upon me, and for a moment I believe that I shall be Member for Bridgwater.

I should not mention such nonsense, except on an occasion when I may serve as an intellectual "specimen,"[1] but I know I wish that I could feel the same hearty, vivid faith in many conclusions of which my understanding says it

[1] It should be stated that this essay was originally read as a paper before a society which discussed subjects of a metaphysical nature.

is satisfied, that I did in this absurdity. And if it should be replied that such folly could be no real belief, for it could not influence any man's action, I am afraid I must say that it did influence my actions. For a long time the ineradicable fatalistic feeling, that I should some time have this constituency, of which I had no chance, hung about my mind, and diminished my interest in other constituencies, where my chances of election would have been rational at any rate.

This case probably exhibits the *maximum* of conviction with the *minimum* of argument, but there are many approximations to it. Persons of untrained minds cannot long live without some belief in any topic which comes much before them. It has been said that if you can only get a middle-class Englishman to think whether there are "snails in Sirius," he will soon have an opinion on it. It will be difficult to make him think, but if he does think, he cannot rest in a negative, he will come to some decision. And on any ordinary topic, of course, it is so. A grocer has a full creed as to foreign policy, a young lady a complete theory of the sacraments, as to which neither has any doubt whatever. But in talking to such persons, I cannot but remember my Bridgwater experience, and ask whether causes like those which begat my folly may not be at the bottom of their "invincible knowledge".

Most persons who observe their own thoughts must have been conscious of the exactly opposite state. There are cases where our intellect has gone through the arguments, and we give a clear assent to the conclusions. But our minds seem dry and unsatisfied. In that case we have the intellectual part of Belief, but want the emotional part.

That belief is not a purely intellectual matter is evident from dreams, where we are always believing, but scarcely ever arguing; and from certain forms of insanity, where fixed delusions seize upon the mind and generate a firmer

belief than any sane person is capable of. These are, of course, "unorthodox" states of mind; but a good psychology must explain them, nevertheless, and perhaps it would have progressed faster if it had been more ready to compare them with the waking states of sane people.

Probably, when the subject is thoroughly examined, "conviction" will be proved to be one of the intensest of human emotions, and one most closely connected with the bodily state. In cases like the Caliph Omar's, it governs all other desires, absorbs the whole nature, and rules the whole life. And in such cases it is accompanied or preceded by the sensation that Scott makes his seer describe as the prelude to a prophecy:—

> "At length the fatal answer came,
> In characters of living flame—
> Not spoke in word, nor blazed in scroll,
> But borne and branded on my soul". [1]

A hot flash seems to burn across the brain. Men in these intense states of mind have altered all history, changed for better or worse the creed of myriads, and desolated or redeemed provinces and ages. Nor is this intensity a sign of truth, for it is precisely strongest in those points in which men differ most from each other. John Knox felt it in his anti-Catholicism; Ignatius Loyola in his anti-Protestantism; and both, I suppose, felt it as much as it is possible to feel it.

Once acutely felt, I believe it is indelible; at least, it does something to the mind which it is hard for anything else to undo. It has been often said that a man who has once really loved a woman, never can be without feeling towards that woman again. He may go on loving her, or he may change and hate her. In the same way, I think,

[1] "Lady of the Lake," canto iv.

experience proves that no one who has had real passionate conviction of a creed, the sort of emotion that burns hot upon the brain, can ever be indifferent to that creed again. He may continue to believe it, and to love it; or he may change to the opposite, vehemently argue against it, and persecute it. But he cannot forget it. Years afterwards, perhaps, when life changes, when external interests cease to excite, when the apathy to surroundings which belongs to the old, begins all at once, to the wonder of later friends, who cannot imagine what is come to him, the grey-headed man returns to the creed of his youth.

The explanation of these facts in metaphysical books is very imperfect. Indeed, I only know one school which professes to explain the emotional, as distinguished from the intellectual element in belief. Mr. Bain (after Mr. Mill)[1] speaks very instructively of the "animal nature of belief," but when he comes to trace its cause, his analysis seems, to me at least, utterly unsatisfactory. He says that "the state of belief is identical with the activity or active disposition of the system at the moment with reference to the thing believed". But in many cases there is firm belief where there is no possibility of action or tendency to it. A girl in a country parsonage will be sure "that Paris never can be taken," or that "Bismarck is a wretch," without being able to act on these ideas or wanting to act on them. Many beliefs, in Coleridge's happy phrase, slumber in the "dormitory of the soul";[2] they are present to the consciousness, but they incite to no action. And perhaps Coleridge is an example of misformed mind in which not only may "Faith" not produce "works," but in which it had a tendency to prevent works. Strong convictions gave him a

[1] Note 107 on chap. xi. of James Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind*. (Forrest Morgan.)

[2] Aphorism 1 of *Aids to Reflection*.

kind of cramp in the will, and he could not act on them. And in very many persons much-indulged conviction exhausts the mind with the attached ideas; teases it, and so, when the time of action comes, makes it apt to turn to different, perhaps opposite ideas, and to act on them in preference.

As far as I can perceive, the power of an idea to cause conviction, independently of any intellectual process, depends on four properties.

1st. *Clearness.* The more unmistakable an idea is to a particular mind, the more is that mind predisposed to believe it. In common life we may constantly see this. If you once make a thing quite clear to a person, the chances are that you will almost have persuaded him of it. Half the world only understand what they believe, and always believe what they understand.

2nd. *Intensity.* This is the main cause why the ideas that flash on the minds of seers, as in Scott's description, are believed; they come mostly when the nerves are exhausted by fasting, watching, and longing; they have a peculiar brilliancy, and therefore they are believed. To this cause I trace too my fixed folly as to Bridgwater. The idea of being member for the town had been so intensely brought home to me by the excitement of a contest, that I could not eradicate it, and that as soon as I recalled any circumstances of the contest it always came back in all its vividness.

3rd. *Constancy.* As a rule, almost every one does accept the creed of the place in which he lives, and every one without exception has a tendency to do so. There are, it is true, some minds which a mathematician might describe as minds of "contrary flexure," whose particular bent it is to contradict what those around them say. And the reason is that in their minds the opposite aspect of every subject is always vividly presented. But even such minds usually accept the *axioms* of their district, the tenets which everybody

always believes. They only object to the variable elements; to the inferences and deductions drawn by some, but not by all.

4th. On the *Interestingness* of the idea, by which I mean the power of the idea to gratify some wish or want of the mind. The most obvious is curiosity about something which is important to me. Rumours that gratify this excite a sort of half-conviction without the least evidence, and with a very little evidence a full, eager, not to say a bigoted one. If a person go into a mixed company, and say authoritatively "that the Cabinet is nearly divided on the Russian question, and that it was only decided by one vote to send Lord Granville's despatch," most of the company will attach some weight more or less to the story, without asking how the secret was known. And if the narrator casually add that he has just seen a subordinate member of the Government, most of the hearers will go away and repeat the anecdote with grave attention, though it does not in the least appear that the lesser functionary told the anecdote about the Cabinet, or that he knew what passed at it.

And the interest is greater when the news falls in with the bent of the hearer. A sanguine man will believe with scarcely any evidence that good luck is coming, and a dismal man that bad luck is coming. As far as I can make out, the professional "Bulls" and "Bears" of the City *do* believe a great deal of what they say, though, of course, there are exceptions, and though neither the most sanguine "bull" nor the most dismal "bear" can believe *all* he says.

Of course, I need not say that this "quality" peculiarly attaches to the greatest problems of human life. The firmest convictions of the most inconsistent answers to the everlasting questions "whence?" and "whither?" have been

generated by this "interestingness" without evidence on which one would invest a penny.

In one case, these causes of irrational conviction seem contradictory. Clearness, as we have seen, is one of them; but obscurity, when obscure things are interesting, is a cause too. But there is no real difficulty here. Human nature at different times exhibits contrasted impulses. There is a passion for sensualism, that is, to eat and drink; and a passion for asceticism, that is, not to eat and drink; so it is quite likely that the clearness of an idea may sometimes cause a movement of conviction, and that the obscurity of another idea may at other times cause one too.

These laws, however, are complex—can they be reduced to any simpler law of human nature? I confess I think that they can, but at the same time I do not presume to speak with the same confidence about it that I have upon other points. Hitherto I have been dealing with the common facts of the adult human mind, as we may see it in others and feel it in ourselves. But I am now going to deal with the "prehistoric" period of the mind in early childhood, as to which there is necessarily much obscurity.

My theory is, that in the first instance a child believes everything. Some of its states of consciousness are perceptive or presentative,—that is, they tell it of some heat or cold, some resistance or non-resistance, then and there present. Other states of consciousness are representative, —that is, they say that certain sensations could be felt or certain facts perceived, in time past or in time to come, or at some place, no matter at what time, then and there out of the reach of perception and sensation. In mature life, too, we have these presentative and representative states in every sort of mixture, but we make a distinction between them. Without remark and without doubt, we believe the "evidence of our senses," that is, the facts of present sensa-

tion and perception; but we do not believe at once and instantaneously the representative states as to what is non-present, whether in time or space. But I apprehend that this is an acquired distinction, and that in early childhood every state of consciousness is believed, whether it be presentative or representative.

Certainly at the beginning of the "historic" period we catch the mind at a period of extreme credulity. When memory begins, and when speech and signs suffice to make a child intelligible, belief is almost omnipresent, and doubt almost never to be found. Childlike credulity is a phrase of the highest antiquity, and of the greatest present aptness.

So striking, indeed, on certain points, is this impulse to believe, that philosophers have invented various theories to explain in detail some of its marked instances. Thus it has been said that children have an intuitive disposition to believe in "testimony"—that is, in the correctness of statements orally made to them. And that they do so is certain. Every child believes what the footman tells it, what its nurse tells it, and what its mother tells it, and probably every one's memory will carry him back to the horrid mass of miscellaneous confusion which he acquired by believing all he heard. But though it is certain that a child believes all assertions made to it, it is not certain that the child so believes in consequence of a special intuitive predisposition restricted to such assertions. It may be that this indiscriminate belief in all sayings is but a relic of an omnivorous acquiescence in all states of consciousness, which is only just extinct when childhood is plain enough to be understood, or old enough to be remembered.

Again, it has been said much more plausibly that we want an intuitive tendency to account for our belief in memory. But I question whether it can be shown that a little child *does* believe in its memories more confidently

than in its imaginations. A child of my acquaintance corrected its mother, who said that "they should never see" two of its dead brothers again, and maintained, "Oh yes, mamma, we shall; we shall see them in heaven, and they will be so glad to see us". And then the child cried with disappointment because its mother, though a most religious lady, did not seem exactly to feel that seeing her children in that manner was as good as seeing them on earth. Now I doubt if that child did not believe this expectation quite as confidently as it believed any past fact, or as it could believe anything at all, and though the conclusion may be true, plainly the child believed, not from the efficacy of the external evidence, but from a strong rush of inward confidence. Why, then, should we want a special intuition to make children believe past facts when, in truth, they go farther and believe with no kind of difficulty future facts as well as past?

If on so abstruse a matter I might be allowed a graphic illustration, I should define doubt as "hesitation produced by collision". A child possessed with the notion that all its fancies are true, finds that acting on one of them brings its head against the table. This gives it pain, and makes it hesitate as to the expediency of doing it again. Early childhood is an incessant education in scepticism, and early youth is so too. All boys are always knocking their heads against the physical world, and all young men are constantly knocking their heads against the social world. And both of them from the same cause—that they are subject to an eruption of emotion which engenders a strong belief, but which is as likely to cause a belief in falsehood as in truth. Gradually, under the tuition of a painful experience, we come to learn that our strongest convictions may be quite false, that many of our most cherished ones are and have been false; and this causes us to seek a "criterion" as to

which beliefs are to be trusted and which are not; and so we are beaten back to the laws of evidence for our guide, though, as Bishop Butler said, in a similar case, we object to be bound by anything so "poor".[1]

That it is really this contention with the world which destroys conviction and which causes doubt, is shown by examining the cases where the mind is secluded from the world. In "dreams," where we are out of collision with fact, we accept everything as it comes, believe everything and doubt nothing. And in violent cases of mania, where the mind is shut up within itself, and cannot, from impotence, perceive what is without, it is as sure of the most chance fancy, as in health it would be of the best proved truths.

And upon this theory we perceive why the four tendencies to irrational conviction which I have set down, survive, and remain in our adult hesitating state as vestiges of our primitive all-believing state. They are all from various causes "adhesive" states—states which it is very difficult to get rid of, and which, in consequence, have retained their power of creating belief in the mind, when other states, which once possessed it too, have quite lost it. *Clear* ideas are certainly more difficult to get rid of than obscure ones. Indeed, some obscure ones we cannot recover, if we once lose them. Everybody, perhaps, has felt all manner of doubts and difficulties in mastering a mathematical problem. At the time, the difficulties seemed as real as the problem, but a day or two after a man has mastered it, he will be wholly unable to imagine or remember where the difficulties were. The demonstration will be perfectly clear to him, and he will be unable to comprehend how any one should fail to perceive it. For life he will recall the clear ideas, but the obscure ones he will never recall, though for some hours, perhaps, they were painful, confused, and oppressive ob-

[1] *Analogy*, part ii., chap. viii., 4th paragraph.

structions. *Intense* ideas are, as every one will admit, recalled more easily than slight and weak ideas. *Constantly* impressed ideas are brought back by the world around us, and if they are so often, get so tied to our other ideas that we can hardly wrench them away. *Interesting* ideas stick in the mind by the associations which give them interest. All the minor laws of conviction resolve themselves into this great one: "That at first we believe all which occurs to us—that afterwards we have a tendency to believe that which we cannot help often occurring to us, and that this tendency is stronger or weaker in some sort of proportion to our inability to prevent the recurrence". When the inability to prevent the recurrence of the idea is very great, so that the reason is powerless on the mind, the consequent "conviction" is an eager, irritable, and ungovernable passion.

If these principles are true, they suggest some lessons which are not now accepted. They prove:—

1. That we should be very careful how we let ourselves believe that which may turn out to be error. Milton says that "error is but opinion," meaning true opinion, "in the making". But when the conviction of any error is a strong passion, it leaves, like all other passions, a permanent mark on the mind. We can never be as if we had never felt it. "Once a heretic, always a heretic," is thus far true, that a mind once given over to a passionate conviction is never as fit as it would otherwise have been to receive the truth on the same subject. Years after the passion may return upon him, and inevitably small recurrences of it will irritate his intelligence and disturb its calm. We cannot at once expel a familiar idea, and so long as the idea remains, its effect will remain too.

2. That we must always keep an account in our minds of the degree of evidence on which we hold our convictions,

and be most careful that we do not permanently permit ourselves to feel a stronger conviction than the evidence justifies. If we do, since evidence is the only criterion of truth, we may easily get a taint of error that may be hard to clear away. This may seem obvious, yet, if I do not mistake, Father Newman's *Grammar of Assent* is little else than a systematic treatise designed to deny and confute it.

3. That if we do, as in life we must sometimes, indulge a "provisional enthusiasm," as it may be called, for an idea—for example, if an orator in the excitement of speaking does not keep his phrases to probability, and if in the hurry of emotion he quite believes all he says, his plain duty is on other occasions to watch himself carefully, and to be sure that he does not as a permanent creed believe what in a peculiar and temporary state he was led to say he felt and to feel.

Similarly, we are all in our various departments of life in the habit of assuming various probabilities as if they were certainties. In Lombard Street the dealers assume that "Messrs. Baring's acceptance at three months' date is sure to be paid," and that "Peel's Act will always be suspended in a panic". And the familiarity of such ideas makes it nearly impossible for any one who spends his day in Lombard Street to doubt of them. But, nevertheless, a person who takes care of his mind will keep up the perception that they are not certainties.

Lastly, we should utilise this intense emotion of conviction as far as we can. Dry minds, which give an intellectual "assent" to conclusions which feel no strong glow of faith in them, often do not know what their opinions are. They have every day to go over the arguments again, or to refer to a note-book to know what they believe. But intense convictions make a memory for themselves, and if they can be kept to the truths of which there is good evidence, they

give a readiness of intellect, a confidence in action, a consistency in character, which are not to be had without them. For a time, indeed, they give these benefits when the propositions believed are false, but then they spoil the mind for seeing the truth, and they are very dangerous, because the believer may discover his error, and a perplexity of intellect, a hesitation in action, and an inconsistency in character are the sure consequences of an entire collapse in pervading and passionate conviction.

THE METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF TOLERATION.

(1874.)

One of the most marked peculiarities of recent times in England is the increased liberty in the expression of opinion. Things are now said constantly and without remark, which even ten years ago would have caused a hubbub, and have drawn upon those who said them much obloquy. But already I think there are signs of a reaction. In many quarters of orthodox opinion I observe a disposition to say, "Surely this is going too far; really we cannot allow such things to be said". And what is more curious, some writers, whose pens are just set at liberty, and who would, not at all long ago, have been turned out of society for the things that they say, are setting themselves to explain the "weakness" of liberty, and to extol the advantages of persecution. As it appears to me that the new practice of this country is a great improvement on its old one, and as I conceive that the doctrine of Toleration rests on what may be called a metaphysical basis, I wish shortly to describe what that basis is.

I should say that, except where it is explained to the contrary, I use the word "Toleration" to mean toleration by law. Toleration by Society of matters not subject to legal penalty is a kindred subject on which, if I have room, I will add a few words, but in the main I propose to deal with the simpler subject,—toleration by law. And by toleration, too, I mean, when it is not otherwise said,

toleration in the public expression of opinions. Toleration of acts and practices is another allied subject on which I can, in a paper like this, but barely hope to indicate what seems to me to be the truth. And I should add, that I deal only with the discussion of impersonal doctrines. The law of libel, which deals with accusations of living persons, is a topic requiring consideration by itself.

Meaning this by "toleration," I do not think we ought to be surprised at a reaction against it. What was said long ago of slavery seems to be equally true of persecution, —it "exists by the law of nature". It is so congenial to human nature, that it has arisen everywhere in past times, as history shows; that the cessation of it is a matter of recent times in England; that even now, taking the world as a whole, the practice and the theory of it are in a triumphant majority. Most men have always much preferred persecution, and do so still; and it is therefore only natural that it should continually reappear in discussion and argument.

One mode in which it tempts human nature is very obvious. Persons of strong opinions wish, above all things, to propagate those opinions. They find close at hand what seems an immense engine for that propagation; they find the *State*, which has often in history interfered for and against opinions,—which has had a great and undeniable influence in helping some and hindering others,—and in their eagerness they can hardly understand why they should not make use of this great engine to crush the errors which they hate, and to replace them with the tenets they approve. So long as there are earnest believers in the world, they will always wish to punish opinions, even if their judgment tells them it is unwise, and their conscience that it is wrong. They may not gratify their inclination, but the inclination will not be the less real.

Since the time of Carlyle, "earnestness" has been a favourite virtue in literature, and it is customary to treat this wish to twist other people's belief into ours as if it were a part of the love of truth. And in the highest minds so it may be. But the mass of mankind have, as I hold, no such fine motive. Independently of truth or falsehood, the spectacle of a different belief from ours is disagreeable to us, in the same way that the spectacle of a different form of dress and manners is disagreeable. A set of schoolboys will persecute a new boy with a new sort of jacket; they will hardly let him have a new-shaped penknife. Grown-up people are just as bad, except when culture has softened them. A mob will hoot a foreigner who looks very unlike themselves. Much of the feeling of "earnest believers" is, I believe, altogether the same. They wish others to think as they do, not only because they wish to diffuse doctrinal truth, but also and much more because they cannot bear to hear the words of a creed different from their own. At any rate, without further analysing the origin of the persecuting impulse, its deep root in human nature, and its great power over most men, are evident.

But this natural impulse was not the only motive—perhaps was not the principal one—of historical persecutions. The main one, or a main one, was a most ancient political idea which once ruled the world, and of which deep vestiges are still to be traced on many sides. The most ancient conception of a State is that of a "religious partnership," in which any member may by his acts bring down the wrath of the gods on the other members, and, so to speak, on the whole company. This danger was, in the conception of the time, at once unlimited and inherited; in any generation, partners A, C, D, etc., might suffer loss of life, or health, or goods—the whole association even might perish, because in a past generation the ancestors of *Z* had somehow offended

the gods. Thus the historian of Athens tells us that after a particular act of sacrilege—a breach of the local privileges of sanctuary—the perpetrators were compelled "to retire into banishment"; and that those who had died before the date he is speaking of were "disinterred and cast beyond the borders". "Yet," he adds, "their exile continuing, as it did, only for a time, was not held sufficient to expiate the impiety for which they have been condemned. The Alkmoônids, one of the most powerful families in Attica, long continued to be looked upon as a tainted race, and in cases of public calamity were liable to be singled out as having by their sacrilege drawn down the judgment of the gods upon their countrymen."[1] And as false opinions about the gods have almost always been thought to be peculiarly odious to them, the misbeliever, the "miscreant," has been almost always thought to be likely not only to impair hereafter the salvation of himself and others in a future world, but also to bring on his neighbours and his nation grievous calamities immediately in this. He has been persecuted to stop political danger more than to arrest intellectual error.

But it will be said: Put history aside, and come to things now. Why should not those who are convinced that certain doctrines are errors, that they are most dangerous, that they may ruin man's welfare here and his salvation hereafter, use the power of the State to extirpate those errors? Experience seems to show that the power of the State can be put forth in that way effectually. Why, then, should it not be put forth? If I had room, I should like for a moment to criticise the word "effectually". I should say that the State, in the cases where it is most wanted, is not of the use which is thought. I admit that it extirpates error, but I doubt if it creates belief—at least, if it does so in cases where the persecuted error is suitable to the place

[1] Grote's *History of Greece*, part ii., chap. x.

and time. In such cases, I think the effect has often been to eradicate a heresy among the few, at the cost of creating a scepticism among the many; to kill the error no doubt, but also to ruin the general belief. And this is the cardinal point, for the propagation of the "truth" is the end of persecution; all else is only a means. But I have not space to discuss this, and will come to the main point.

I say that the State power should not be used to arrest discussion, because the State power may be used equally for truth or error, for Mohammedanism or Christianity, for belief or no-belief, but in discussion truth has an advantage. Arguments always tell for truth as such, and against error as such; if you let the human mind alone, it has a preference for good argument over bad; it oftener takes truth than not. But if you do not let it alone, you give truth no advantage at all; you substitute a game of force, where all doctrines are equal, for a game of logic, where the truer have the better chance.

The process by which truth wins in discussion is this,—certain strong and eager minds embrace original opinions, seldom all wrong, never quite true, but of a mixed sort, part truth, part error. These they inculcate on all occasions, and on every side, and gradually bring the cooler sort of men to a hearing of them. These cooler people serve as quasi-judges, while the more eager ones are a sort of advocates; a Court of Inquisition is sitting perpetually, investigating, informally and silently, but not ineffectually, what, on all great subjects of human interest, is truth and error. There is no sort of infallibility about the court; often it makes great mistakes, most of its decisions are incomplete in thought and imperfect in expression. Still, on the whole, the force of evidence keeps it right. The truth has the best of the proof, and therefore wins most of the judgments. The process is slow, far more tedious than the worst Chancery

suit. Time in it is reckoned not by days, but by years, or rather by centuries. Yet, on the whole, it creeps along, if you do not stop it. But all is arrested, if persecution begins —if you have a *coup d'état*, and let loose soldiers on the court; for it is perfect chance which litigant turns them in, or what creed they are used to compel men to believe.

This argument, however, assumes two things. In the first place, it presupposes that we are speaking of a state of society in which discussion is possible. And such societies are not very common. Uncivilised man is not capable of discussion: savages have been justly described as having "the intellect of children with the passions and strength of men".[1] Before anything like speculative argument can be used with them, their intellect must be strengthened and their passions restrained. There was, as it seems to me, a long preliminary period before human nature, as we now see it, existed, and while it was being formed. During that preliminary period, persecution, like slavery, played a most considerable part. Nations mostly became nations by having a common religion. It was a necessary condition of the passage from a loose aggregate of savages to a united polity, that they should believe in the same gods and worship these gods in the same way. What was necessary was, that they should for a long period—for centuries, perhaps—lead the same life and conform to the same usages. They believed that the "gods of their fathers" had commanded these usages. Early law is hardly to be separated from religious ritual: it is more like the tradition of a Church than the enactments of a statute-book. It is a thing essentially immemorial and sacred. It is not conceived of as capable either of addition or diminution; it is a body of holy customs which no one is allowed either to break or to impugn. The use of these is to aid in creating

[1] Sir John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*, p. 465.

a common national character, which in after-times may be tame enough to bear discussion, and which may suggest common axioms upon which discussion can be founded. Till that common character has been formed, discussion is impossible; it cannot be used to find out truth, for it cannot exist; it is not that we have to forego its efficacy on purpose, we have not the choice of it, for its prerequisites cannot be found. The case of civil liberty is, as I conceive, much the same. Early ages need a coercive despotism more than they need anything else. The age of debate comes later. An omnipotent power to enforce the sacred law is that which is then most required. A constitutional opposition would be born before its time. It would be dragging the wheel before the horses were harnessed. The strongest advocates both of Liberty and Toleration may consistently hold that there were unhappy ages before either became possible, and when attempts at either would have been pernicious.

The case is analogous to that of education. Every parent wisely teaches his child his own creed, and till the child has attained a certain age, it is better that he should not hear too much of any other. His mind will in the end be better able to weigh arguments, because it does not begin to weigh them so early. He will hardly comprehend any creed unless he has been taught some creed. But the restrictions of childhood must be relaxed in youth, and abandoned in manhood. One object of education is to train us for discussion, and as that training gradually approaches to completeness, we should gradually begin to enter into and to take part in discussion. The restrictions that are useful at nine years old are pernicious at nineteen.

This analogy would have seemed to me obvious, but there are many most able persons who turn the matter just the other way. They regard the discipline of education as

a precedent for persecution. They say, "I would no sooner let the nation at large read that bad book than I would let my children read it". They refuse to admit that the age of the children makes any difference. At heart they think that they are wiser than the mass of mankind, just as they are wiser than their children, and would regulate the studies of both unhesitatingly. But experience shows that no man is on all points so wise as the mass of men are after a good discussion, and that if the ideas of the very wisest were by miracle to be fixed on the race, the certain result would be to stereotype monstrous error. If we fixed the belief of Bacon, we should believe that the earth went round the sun; if we fixed that of Newton, we should believe "that the Argonautic expedition was a real event, and occurred B.C. 937; that Hercules was a real person, and delivered Theseus, another real person, B.C. 936; that in the year 1036 Ceres, a woman of Sicily, in seeking her daughter who was stolen, came into Attica, and there taught the Greeks to sow corn." And the worst is, that the minds of most would-be persecutors are themselves unfixed: their opinions are in a perpetual flux; they would persecute all others for tenets which yesterday they had not heard of and which they will not believe to-morrow.

But it will be said, the theory of Toleration is not so easy as that of education. We know by a certain fact when a young man is grown up and can bear discussion. We judge by his age, as to which every one is agreed. But we cannot tell by any similar patent fact when a State is mature enough to bear discussion. There may be two opinions about it. And I quite agree that the matter of fact is more difficult to discover in one case than in the other; still it is a matter of fact which the rulers of the State must decide upon their responsibility, and as best they can. And the highest sort of rulers will decide it like

the English in India —with no reference to their own belief. For years the English prohibited the preaching of Christianity in India, though it was their own religion, because they thought that it could not be tranquilly listened to. They now permit it, because they find that the population can bear the discussion. Of course, most Governments are wholly unequal to so high a morality and so severe a self-command. The Governments of most countries are composed of persons who wish everybody to believe as they do, merely because they do. Some here and there, from a higher motive, so eagerly wish to propagate their opinions, that they are unequal to consider the problem of toleration impartially. They persecute till the persecuted become strong enough to make them desist. But the delicacy of a rule and the unwillingness of Governments to adopt it, do not prove that it is not the best and the right one. There are already in inevitable jurisprudence many lines of vital importance just as difficult to draw. The line between sanity and insanity has necessarily to be drawn, and it is as nice as anything can be. The competency of people to bear discussion is not intrinsically more difficult than their competency to manage their own affairs, though perhaps a Government is less likely to be impartial and more likely to be biassed in questions of discussion than in pecuniary ones.

Secondly, the doctrine that rulers are to permit discussion, assumes not only, as we have seen, that discussion is possible, but also that discussion will not destroy the Government. No Government is bound to permit a controversy which will annihilate itself. It is a trustee for many duties, and if possible, it must retain the power to perform those duties. The controversies which may ruin it are very different in different countries. The Government of the day must determine in each case what those questions are. If the Roman Emperors who persecuted Christianity

really did so because they imagined that Christianity would destroy the Roman Empire, I think they are to be blamed not for their misconception of duty, but for their mistake of fact. The existence of Christianity was not really more inconsistent with the existence of the Empire in the time of Diocletian than in that of Constantine; but if Diocletian thought that it was inconsistent, it was his duty to preserve the Empire.

It will be asked, "What do you mean by preserving a society? All societies are in a state of incipient change; the best of them are often the most changing; what is meant, then, by saying you will 'preserve' any? You admit that you cannot keep them unaltered, what then do you propose to do?" I answer that, in this respect, the life of societies is like the life of the individuals composing them. You cannot interfere so as to keep a man's body unaltered; you can interfere so as to keep him alive. What changes in such cases will be fatal, is a question of fact. The Government must determine what will, so to say, "break up the whole thing" and what will not. No doubt it may decide wrong. In France, the country of experiments, General Cavaignac said, "A Government which allows its principle to be discussed, is a lost Government," and therefore he persecuted on behalf of the Republic, thinking it was essential to society. Louis Napoleon similarly persecuted on behalf of the Second Empire; M. Thiers on behalf of the Republic again; the Duc de Broglie now persecutes on behalf of the existing nondescript. All these may be mistakes, or some of them, or none. Here, as before, the practical difficulties in the application of a rule do not disprove its being the true and the only one.

It will be objected that this principle is applicable only to truths which are gained by discussion. "We admit," such objectors say, "that where discussion is the best or

the only means of proving truth, it is unadvisable to prohibit that discussion, but there are other means besides discussion of arriving at truth, which are sometimes better than discussion even where discussion is applicable, and sometimes go beyond it and attain regions in which it is inapplicable; and where those more efficient means are applicable, it may be wise to prohibit discussion, for in these instances discussion may confuse the human mind and impede it in the use of those higher means. The case is analogous to that of the eyes. For the most part it is a sound rule to tell persons who want to see things, that they must necessarily use *both* their eyes, and rely on them. But there are cases in which that rule is wrong. If a man wants to see things too distant for the eyes, as the satellites of Jupiter and the ring of Saturn, you must tell him, on the contrary, to shut one eye and look through a telescope with the other. The ordinary mode of using the common instruments may, in exceptional cases, interfere with the right use of the supplementary instruments." And I quite admit that there are such exceptional cases and such additional means; but I say that their existence introduces no new difficulty into the subject, and that it is no reason for prohibiting discussion except in the cases in which we have seen already that it was advisable to prohibit it.

Putting the matter in the most favourable way for these objectors, and making all possible concessions to them, I believe the exceptions which they contend for must come at last to three.

First, there are certain necessary propositions which the human mind *will* think, must think, and cannot help thinking. For example, we must believe that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other,—that a thing cannot *both* be and not be,—that it must *either* be or not be. These truths are not gained by discussion; on the

contrary, discussion presupposes at least some of them, for you cannot argue without first principles any more than you can use a lever without a fulcrum. The prerequisites of reasoning must somehow be recognised by the human mind before we begin to reason. So much is obvious, but then it is obvious also that in such cases attempts at discussion cannot do any harm. If the human mind has in it certain first principles which it cannot help seeing, and which it accepts of itself, there is no harm in arguing against those first principles. You may contend as long as you like, that things which are equal to the same thing are *not* equal to each other, or that a thing *can* both exist and not exist at the same time, but you will not convince any one. If you could convince any one you would do him irreparable harm, for you would hurt the basis of his mind and destroy the use of his reason. But happily you cannot convince him. That which the human mind cannot help thinking it cannot help thinking, and discussion can no more remove the primary perceptions than it can produce them. The multiplication table will remain the multiplication table, neither more nor less, however much we may argue either for it or against it.

But, though the denial of the real necessary perceptions of the human mind cannot possibly do any harm, the denial of alleged necessary perceptions is often essential to the discovery of truth. The human mind, as experience shows, is apt to manufacture sham self-evidences. The most obvious case is, that men perpetually "do sums" wrong. If we dwell long enough and intently enough on the truths of arithmetic they are in each case self-evident; but, if we are too quick, or let our minds get dull, we may make any number of mistakes. A certain deliberation and a certain intensity are both essential to correctness in the matter. Fictitious necessities of thought will be imposed on us without end unless we are careful. The greatest

minds are not exempt from the risk of such mistakes even in matters most familiar to them. On the contrary, the history of science is full of cases in which the ablest men and the most experienced assumed that it was impossible to think things which are in matter of fact true, and which it has since been found possible to think quite easily. The mode in which these sham self-evidences are distinguished from the real ones is by setting as many minds as possible to try as often as possible whether they can help thinking the thing or not. But such trials will never exist without discussion. So far, therefore, the existence of self-evidences in the human mind is not a reason for discouraging discussion, but a reason for encouraging it.

Next, it is certainly true that many conclusions which are by no means self-evident and which are gradually obtained, nevertheless, are not the result of discussion. For example, the opinion of a man as to the characters of his friends and acquaintances is not the result of distinct argument, but the aggregate of distinct impressions: it is not the result of an investigation consciously pursued, but the effect of a multiplicity of facts involuntarily presented; it is a definite thing and has a most definite influence on the mind, but its origin is indefinite and not to be traced; it is like a great fund raised in very small subscriptions and of which the subscribers' names are lost. But here again, though these opinions too were not gained by discussion, their existence is a reason for promoting discussion, not for preventing it. Every-day experience shows that these opinions as to character are often mistaken in the last degree. Human character is a most complex thing, and the impressions which different people form of it are as various as the impressions which the inhabitants of an impassable mountain have of its shape and size. Each observer has an aggregate idea derived from certain actions

and certain sayings, but the real man has always or almost always said a thousand sayings of a kind quite different and in a connection quite different; he has done a vast variety of actions among "other men" and "other minds"; a mobile person will often seem hardly the same if you meet him in very different societies. And how, except by discussion, is the true character of such a person to be decided? Each observer must bring his contingent to the list of *data;* those data must be arranged and made use of. The certain and positive facts as to which every one is agreed must have their due weight; they must be combined and compared with the various impressions as to which no two people exactly coincide. A rough summary must be made of the whole. In no other way is it possible to arrive at the truth of the matter. Without discussion each mind is dependent on its own partial observation. A great man is one image—one thing, so to speak—to his valet, another to his son, another to his wife, another to his greatest friend. None of these must be stereotyped; all must be compared. To prohibit discussion is to prohibit the corrective process.

Lastly, I hold that there are first principles or first perceptions which are neither the result of constant though forgotten trials like those last spoken of, nor common to all the race like the first. The most obvious seem to me to be the principles of taste. The primary perceptions of beauty vary much in different persons, and for different persons at different times, but no one can say that they are not most real and most influential parts of human nature. There is hardly a thing made by human hands which is not affected more or less by the conception of beauty felt by the maker; and there is hardly a human life which would not have been different if the idea of beauty in the mind of the man who lived it had been different.

But certainly it would not answer to exclude subjects of

taste from discussion, and to allow one school of taste-teachers to reign alone, and to prohibit the teaching of all rival schools. The effect would be to fix on all ages the particular ideas of one age on a matter which is beyond most others obscure and difficult to reduce to a satisfactory theory. The human mind evidently differs at various times immensely in its conclusions upon it, and there is nothing to show that the era of the persecutor is wiser than any other era, or that his opinion is better than any one else's.

The case of these variable first principles is much like that of the "personal equation," as it is called in the theory of observations. Some observers, it is found, habitually see a given phenomenon, say the star coming to the meridian, a little sooner than most others; some later; no two persons exactly coincide. The first thing done when a new man comes into an observatory for practical work is to determine whether he sees quick or slow; and this is called the "personal equation". But, according to the theory of persecution, the national astronomer in each country would set up his own mind as the standard; in one country he would be a quick man, and would not let the slow people contest what he said; in another he would be a slow man, and would not tolerate the quick people, or let men speak their minds; and so the astronomical observations—the astronomical *creeds* if I may say so—of different countries would radically differ. But as toleration and discussion are allowed, no such absurd result follows. The observations of different minds are compared with those of others, and truth is assumed to lie in the mean between the errors of the quick people and the errors of the slow ones.

No such accurate result can be expected in more complex matters. The phenomena of astronomical observation relate only to very simple events, and to a very simple fact about these events. But perceptions of beauty have an infinite

complexity: they are all subtle aggregates of countless details, and about each of these details probably every mind in some degree differs from every other one. But in a rough way the same sort of agreement is possible. Discussion is only an organised mode by which various minds compare their conclusions with those of various others. Bold and strong minds describe graphic and definite impressions: at first sight these impressions seem wholly different. Writers of the last century thought classical architecture altogether superior to Gothic; many writers now put it just the other way, and maintain a mediæval cathedral to be a thing altogether superior in kind and nature to anything classical. For years the world thought Claude's landscapes perfect. Then came Mr. Ruskin, and by his ability and eloquence he has made a whole generation depreciate them, and think Turner's altogether superior. The extrication of truth by such discussions is very slow; it is often retarded; it is often thrown back; it often seems to pause for ages. But upon the whole it makes progress, and the principle of that progress is this: Each mind which is true to itself, and which draws its own impressions carefully, and which compares those impressions with the impressions of others, arrives at certain conclusions, which as far as that mind is concerned are ultimate, and are its highest conclusions. These it sets down as expressively as it can on paper, or communicates by word of mouth, and these again form data which other minds can contrast with their own. In this incessant comparison eccentric minds fall off on every side; some like Milton, some Wordsworth, some can see nothing in Dryden, some find Racine intolerably dull, some think Shakespeare barbarous, others consider the contents of the Iliad "battles and schoolboy stuff". With history it is the same; some despise one great epoch, some another. Each epoch has its violent partisans, who will listen to nothing

else, and who think every other epoch in comparison mean and wretched. These violent minds are always faulty and sometimes absurd, but they are almost always useful to mankind. They compel men to hear neglected truth. They uniformly exaggerate their gospel; but it generally *is* a gospel. Carlyle said many years since of the old Poor-law in England: "It being admitted then that outdoor relief should at once cease, what means did great Nature take to make it cease? She created various men who thought the cessation of outdoor relief the one thing needful." In the same way, it being desirable that the taste of men should be improved on some point, Nature's instrument on that point is some man of genius, of attractive voice and limited mind, who declaims and insists, not only that the special improvement is a good thing in itself, but the best of all things, and the root of all other good things. Most useful, too, are others less apparent; shrinking, sensitive, testing minds, of whom often the world knows nothing, but each of whom is in the circle just near him an authority on taste, and communicates by personal influence the opinions he has formed. The human mind of a certain maturity, if left alone, prefers real beauty to sham beauty, and prefers it the sooner if original men suggest new charms, and quiet men criticise and judge of them.

But an æsthetical persecution would derange all this, for generally the compulsive power would be in the hands of the believers in some tradition. The State represents "the rough force of society," and is little likely to be amendable to new charms or new ideas; and therefore the first victim of the persecution would be the original man who was proposing that which in the end would most improve mankind; and the next would be the testing and discerning critic who was examining these ideas and separating the chaff from the wheat in them. Neither would conform to the old tradition.

The inventor would be too eager; the critic too scrupulous; and so a heavy code of ancient errors would be chained upon mankind. Nor would the case be at all the better if by some freak of events the propounder of the new doctrine were to gain full control, and were to prohibit all he did not like. He would try, and try in vain, to make the inert mass of men accept or care for his new theory, and his particular enemy would be the careful critic who went with him a little way and then refused to go any further. If you allow persecution, the partisans of the new sort of beauty will, if they can, attack those of the old sort; and the partisans of the old sort will attack those of the new sort; while both will turn on the quiet and discriminating person who is trying to select what is good from each. Some chance taste will be fixed for ages.

But it will be said, "Whoever heard of such nonsense as an æsthetical persecution? Everybody knows such matters of taste must be left to take care of themselves; as far as they are concerned, nobody wants to persecute or prohibit." But I have spoken of matters of taste because it is sometimes best to speak in parables. The case of morals and religion, in which people have always persecuted and still wish to persecute, is the very same. If there are (as I myself think there are) ultimate truths of morals and religion which more or less vary for each mind, some sort of standard and some kind of agreement can only be arrived at about it in the very same way. The same comparison of one mind with another is necessary; the same discussion; the same use of criticising minds; the same use of original ones. The mode of arriving at truth is the same, and also the mode of stopping it.

We now see the reason why, as I said before, religious persecution often extirpates new doctrines, but commonly fails to maintain the belief in old tenets. You can prevent

whole classes of men from hearing of the religion which is congenial to them, but you cannot make men believe a religion which is uncongenial. You can prevent the natural admirers of Gothic architecture from hearing anything of it, or from seeing it; but you cannot make them admire classical architecture. You may prevent the admirers of Claude from seeing his pictures, or from praising them; but you cannot make them admirers of Turner. Just so, you may by persecution prevent minds prone to be Protestant from being Protestant; but you will not make men real Catholics: you may prevent naturally Catholic minds from being Catholic; but you will not make them genuine Protestants. You will not make those believe your religion who are predisposed by nature in favour of a different kind of religion; you will make of them, instead, more or less conscious sceptics. Being denied the sort of religion of which the roots are in their minds and which they could believe, they will for ever be conscious of an indefinite want. They will constantly feel after something which they are never able to attain; they will never be able to settle upon anything; they will feel an instinctive repulsion from everything; they will be sceptics at heart, because they were denied the creed for which their heart craves; they will live as indifferentists, because they were withheld by force from the only creed to which they would not be indifferent. Persecution in intellectual countries produces a superficial conformity, but also underneath an intense, incessant, implacable doubt.

Upon examination, therefore, the admission that certain truths are not gained by discussion introduces no new element into the subject. The discussion of such truths is as necessary as of all other truths. The only limitations are that men's minds shall in the particular society be mature enough to bear the discussion, and that the discussion shall not destroy the society.

I acknowledge these two limitations to the doctrine that discussion should be free, but I do not admit another which is often urged. It is said that those who write against toleration should not be tolerated; that discussion should not aid the enemies of discussion. But why not? If there is a strong Government and a people fit for discussion, why should not the cause be heard? We must not assume that the liberty of discussion has no case of exception. We have just seen that there are, in fact, several such. In each instance, let the people decide whether the particular discussion shall go on or not. Very likely, in some cases, they may decide wrong; but it is better that they should so decide, than that we should venture to anticipate all experience, and to make sure that they cannot possibly be right.

It is plain, too, that the argument here applied to the toleration of opinion has no application to that of actions. The human mind in the cases supposed, learns by freely hearing all arguments, but in no case does it learn by trying freely all practices. Society, as we now have it, cannot exist at all unless certain acts are prohibited. It goes on much better because many other acts are prohibited also. The Government must take the responsibility of saying what actions it will allow; that is its first business, and the allowance of all would be the end of civilisation. But it must, under the conditions specified, hear all opinions, for the tranquil discussion of all more than anything else promotes the progressive knowledge of truth, which is the mainspring of civilisation.

Nor does the argument that the law should not impose a penalty on the expression of any opinion equally prove that society should not in many cases apply a penalty to that expression. Society can deal much more severely than the law with many kinds of acts, because it need be far less strict in the evidence it requires. It can take cognisance of matters

of common repute and of things of which every one is sure, but which nobody can prove. Particularly, it can fairly well compare the character of the doctrine with the character of the agent, which law can do but imperfectly, if at all. And it is certain that opinions are evidence of the character of those who hold them—not conclusive evidence, but still presumptive. Experience shows that every opinion is compatible with what every one would admit to be a life fairly approvable, a life far higher than that of the mass of men. Great scepticism and great belief have both been found in characters whom both sceptics and believers must admire. Still, on the whole, there is a certain kinship between belief and character; those who disagree with a man's fundamental creed will generally disapprove of his habitual character. If, therefore, society sees a man maintaining opinions which by experience it has been led to connect with actions such as it discountenances, it is justified in provisionally discountenancing the man who holds those opinions. Such a man should be put to the proof to show by his life that the opinions which he holds are not connected with really pernicious actions, as society thinks they are. If he is visibly leading a high life, society should discountenance him no longer; it is then clear that he did not lead a bad life, and the idea that he did or might lead such a life was the only reason for so doing. A doubt was suggested, but it also has been removed. This habit of suspicion does not, on the whole, impair free discussion; perhaps even it improves it. It keeps out the worst disputants, men of really bad character, whose opinions are the results of that character, and who refrain from publishing them, because they fear what society may say. If the law could similarly distinguish between good disputants and bad, it might usefully impose penalties on the bad. But, of course, this is impossible. Law cannot distinguish between the niceties of character; it must punish

the publication of an opinion, if it punishes at all, no matter whether the publisher is a good man or whether he is a bad one. In such a matter, society is a discriminating agent: the law is but a blind one.

To most people I may seem to be slaying the slain, and proving what no one doubts. People, it will be said, no longer wish to persecute. But I say, they *do* wish to persecute. In fact, from their writings, and still better from their conversation, it is easy to see that very many believers would persecute sceptics, and that very many sceptics would persecute believers. Society may be wiser; but most earnest believers and most earnest unbelievers are not at all wiser.

THE PUBLIC WORSHIP REGULATION BILL[1]

(1874.)

If the "Public Worship Regulation Bill" dealt only with subjects theological or religious, we should not interfere in the discussion; but it deals also with political questions on which we do not think it right to be silent, especially as many whom we much respect have, we think, selected a policy of which the effect will be the reverse of what they expect, and the success of which they may hereafter much regret.

All changes in England should be made slowly and after long discussion. Public opinion should be permitted to ripen upon them. And the reason is, that all the important English institutions are the relics of a long past; that they have undergone many transformations; that, like old houses which have been altered many times, they are full both of conveniences and inconveniences which at first sight would not be imagined. Very often a rash alterer would pull down the very part which makes them habitable, to cure a minor evil or improve a defective outline.

The English Church is one of those among our institutions which, if it is to be preserved at all, should be touched most anxiously. It is one of our oldest institutions. Every

[1] [This paper originally appeared in the *Economist* on the occasion of the adoption by the Government of the late Mr. Russell Gurney's Public Worship Regulation Bill. It is here included as a telling practical illustration of the teaching of the previous essay.—Editor.]

part of it has a history, which few of us thoroughly understand, but which we all know to be long and important. In its political relations it has been altered many times, and each time under circumstances of considerable complexity. The last settlement was made more than two hundred years ago, when men's minds were in a very different state from what they are now: when Newton had not written, when Locke had not thought, when physical science, as we now have it, did not exist, when modern philosophy, for England at least, had not begun. The railways, the telegraphs, the very common-sense of these times, would have been unintelligible in the year 1660; they would have been still more unintelligible in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. To attempt to enforce on us now a settlement made in times so different, is a grave undertaking; it ought only to be made after the most ample discussion, and when every competent person has had time to consider the effect.

We have as yet felt little inconvenience from our old law, because we have dealt with it in a truly English manner. Always refusing to change it explicitly, always saying that we would never so change it, we were changing it silently all the while. Year by year this practice was omitted, or this habit insensibly changed. Each generation differed from its fathers; and though they might in part utter the same words, they did not mean the same things; their intellectual life was different. Incessant changes in science, in literature, in art, and in politics—in all that forms thinking minds—have made it impossible that really and in fact we should think the same things in 1874 as our ancestors in 1674 or 1774. Just as in legal theory Queen Victoria has pretty much the same prerogative as Queen Elizabeth, so too in legal theory the English Church may be identical with that of two hundred years ago; but the Church is not a legal theory, it is "a congre-

gation of faithful men";[1] and no one of these is in a state of mind identical, or nearly identical, with those of two hundred years ago.

Many Continental statesmen would be much puzzled at this insensible alteration; they would have a difficulty in imagining a law which was a law in theory but not a law in practice, which no one would alter in word and no one enforce in reality. But the English are very practised in this sort of arrangement—they have a kind of genius for the compensation of errors. For many years we had probably the worst and most bloody penal law in Europe; it is awful to read the old statutes which fix death as the penalty for minor acts altogether undeserving of it. But these statutes did not work nearly so much evil as might have been expected. There was besides a complex system of indictments which let off very many culprits upon trifling flaws, and there was also an absurd system of incessant remissions and pardons; the worst evils of an excessively bad law were exceedingly mitigated by a very bad mode of applying it. Speaking roughly, and subject to minor criticism, the history has been the same in the Church; in it, too, an imperfect law has been remedied by an imperfect mode of procedure. The Church has been allowed to change in this and that because it has been exceedingly difficult to interfere with it. The legal penalty against change has been distant, costly, and uncertain; and therefore it has not been applied. Change has been possible because the punishment of change was difficult. But the essence of the "Public Worship Regulation Bill" is to make that punishment easy. "If the Rubric says so," say its supporters, "the Rubric ought to be enforced." This is as if Sir Samuel Romilly had attacked, not our bad penal code, but our bad penal

[1] No. XIX. of the Articles.

procedure. If, by the historical growth of approximate equivalents, *A* mitigates *B*, you will deteriorate, not improve the world, if you change *A* without changing *B*, though both may be evils.

The analogy, indeed, very imperfectly expresses the truth. In the recent history of the Church, the English have conspicuously shown another of their predominant peculiarities—indifference to abstract truth. When a quarter of a century ago English lawyers in the Court of Privy Council were first required to decide theological questions, they did so in a way which astonished theologians. They declined to supply any abstract proposition. If the enacted formularies contained such and such words, no clergyman of the Church could, according to them, contradict those words, but they allowed the clergy to say anything else. We cannot use theological terms here; but suppose, by an economical analogy, the formulary had said that "Free-trade was beneficial to mankind," the lawyers would have decided that no clergyman could say that free-trade was not beneficial; but they would have allowed him to say that "Commercial liberty was inexpressibly disastrous to mankind," because as lawyers they would not undertake to say that "free-trade" and "commercial liberty" meant the same thing, or that in an abstract subject the two phrases might not in some way and to some minds seem consistent. In mere description this kind of decision may not seem very sensible, and it is utterly contrary to any which a theologian would ever have adopted; but in practice it preserved the Church Establishment. It was first applied in the Gorham case, and retained the Evangelical clergy in the Church; then, in the *Essays and Reviews* case, it retained the Broad Church; and lastly, in Mr. Bennett's case, it retained the High Church. If the Establishment was to be maintained, it was necessary that all these

parties should be kept side by side within it, and by this system of interpretation they were thus kept.

Unfortunately, the courts of law have not been able to apply the same sort of judicial decision to the practical directions for the public worship of the Church which they applied to her theoretical teachings. There is inevitably something more distinct and clear about acts which are required to be done at a given time and place, than in statements of abstract doctrine. When the courts have been appealed to, it has not been possible to apply to ritual the same comprehensiveness which has had such excellent political effects in the case of doctrine. But, nevertheless, there is exactly the same necessity for it. Almost every party in the Church is harassed by some of her rules, just as it is hampered by some of her words. The Broad Church dislikes the Athanasian creed, and avoids the use of it. The Low Church and the High Church are in vital and necessary opposition as to the mode of conducting the Sacramental services. In every characteristic Church every party thinks probably something is done which the strict Rubric would forbid, or something omitted which it would prescribe. Until now this difficulty has not been very acutely felt. As we have explained, the imperfection of the law was cured by the imperfection of the procedure. No doubt the rubrics were framed in other days; no doubt they took no notice of the wants of the present day; no doubt a strict adherence to them would expel from the Church very many whose doctrines had been decided to be consistent with hers. And then, to enforce the observance of the Rubric was difficult, costly, and dubious, and so the natural evil did not happen. The wants of various minds were variously met by various deviations from the law, which in theory were liable to penalties, but which in practice were unpunished.

The scope of the "Public Worship Regulation Bill" is to destroy this variety. It is a new Act of Uniformity as far as "public worship" is concerned. A short and simple process—which has been so often stated that we need not here describe it—is prescribed which will enable objectors to enforce any rubric, and which no doubt will cause them to be so enforced. The proposers of the bill have not enough considered the applicability of this primary assumption: no Church can have only a single form of public worship unless it has also a single creed. An apparent uniformity may be maintained in specified details; but in spirit, in feeling, in its deepest consequences on those who habitually hear and see, the effect will be different. A service conducted by a Broad Churchman, explained in his sermon, and commented upon in his manner, will be very unlike what it would be if that service is conducted by a *bonâ fide* dogmatic believer. No mere Act of Uniformity can prevent this. Still less can it efface the inevitable difference between a Sacramental service in the hands of a High Church clergyman and in those of a Low Church one. The two belong to separate and unlike species. The one believes that the service contains a supernatural act, the other that it is an edifying rite; the one regards it as an invisible miracle, the other as a conspicuous exhortation. Make what laws you like, how can the two perform these services with the same tone of mind, the same kind of thought, the same effect on the congregation? You may dress two men up in the same clothes, but they will be two men for all that. If once you permit two or more faiths in a Church, you in truth permit two or more Rituals. The various feelings and the various creeds will somehow find a means of bringing themselves into contact with the minds with which they wish to be in contact. You have "swallowed the camel" when you permitted the creed, and

it is useless to "strain at the gnat" and forbid the expression of it.

This is to be especially borne in mind by those who think that there is a party in the Church that desires to introduce Romanism, and who approve of this bill because they think it will counteract that party. The essence of Romanism is not in its ceremonies, but in its doctrines. As was explained to the House of Commons on Wednesday, nothing could be simpler than the mode in which Mr. Newman used to conduct his services at Oxford; and yet he then held "Roman" doctrine, and penetrated half the young men about him with a deep faith in the highest sacramental principle. Unless you reverse the decision in the Bennett case, a doctrine which no common person will distinguish from Romanism will continue to be, and must be, taught in the Church of England. We do not believe it will lose in strength by being denied this or that form of Ritual. It will attract in any case the minds to whom it is congenial, and it will rather gain than lose in *éclat* by seeming to be persecuted.

We shall be told that this argument proves too much; for that it proves that this bill will do nothing at all, and that therefore at least it will do no harm. But it will, we think, do great harm—at least, if it be good to keep the Establishment, and if it does harm to weaken it. The real danger of the Establishment is from within, not from without. The manner in which its sections have been retained within its limits has in part developed, and as time goes on is still developing more largely, a great evil. Specially the Low Church, specially the Broad Church, and specially the High Church, have all been kept in her communion because the judges refused to draw certain logical inferences from her formularies; as lawyers they declined to draw them. But intellectual young men who are thinking of becoming clergy-

men, do not like this reasoning. They say: "The courts of law may not like to draw these inferences, but I must. I have spent my youth in a mental training which has prepared me to draw them, and which compels me to do so. Educated as I have been, I cannot take half an argument and leave it; I must work it out to the end. That end seems to me inconsistent with this or that of the formularies of the Church. Others say it is not, but I am not sure that it is not; at any rate, I do not like to risk the happiness of my life upon its being consistent. If in after-years my investigation should run counter to a vast collection of assertions framed by various men, in various ages, of various minds, what will be my fate? I must either sacrifice the profession by which I live, or the creed in which I believe. The lawyers probably might not turn me out indeed; but my conscience was not made by lawyers—I shall have to turn myself out." This is the sort of thought which more and more prevents intellectual young men from taking orders, and we are beginning to see the effect. The moral excellence and the practical piety of the clergy are as good as ever; but they want individuality of thought and originality of mind. They have too universal a conformity to commonplace opinion. They are not only conscientious, but indecisive; more and more they belong to the most puzzling class to argue with, for more and more they "candidly confess" that they must admit your premises, but, on "account of the obscurity of the subject," must decline to draw the inevitable inference. Already this intellectual poorness is beginning to be felt; and if it should augment, it will destroy the Establishment. She will not have in her ranks arguers who can maintain her position either against those who believe more or against those who believe less. Scepticism sends trained and logical minds to the intellectual conflict; Romanism does so also; but the Established Church refuses them—refuses them silently

and indirectly, but still effectually. The Public Worship Bill will, we conceive, augment this difficulty almost at the very point at which its being augmented will be most calamitous. Many young men who are acutely conscious of the restraints of the Establishment in speculation, are attracted by its freedom in practice. "I may be cramped in metaphysics," they think at heart, "but I shall be free in action." But this bill will be a measure—for aught young men can tell, the first of a series—which will limit the freedom of their lives, and cramp them on the side of practice as they already are on the side of thought. The most malevolent enemy of the Established Church could deal her no acuter wound.

Upon the whole, we can conceive nothing clearer than that this bill should not pass this year. We are certain that members of Parliament have not considered the necessary arguments, and that the nation has not done so either.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON.[1]

(1869.)

Perhaps I should be ashamed to confess it, but I own I opened the three large volumes of Mr. Robinson's memoirs with much anxiety. Their bulk, in the first place, appalled me; but that was by no means my greatest apprehension. I knew I had a hundred times heard Mr. Robinson say that he hoped something he would leave behind would "be published and be worth publishing". I was aware too—for it was no deep secret—that for half a century or more he had kept a diary, and that he had been preserving correspondence besides; and I was dubious what sort of things these would be, and what—to use Carlyle's words—any human editor could make of them. Even when Mr. Robinson used to talk so, I used to shudder; for the men who have tried to be memoir-writers and failed, are as numerous, or nearly so, as those who have tried to be poets and failed. A specific talent is as necessary for the one as for the other. But as soon as I had read a little of the volumes, all these doubts passed away. I saw at once that Mr. Robinson had an excellent power of narrative-writing, and that the editor of his remains had made a most judicious use of excellent materials.

Perhaps more than anything it was the modesty of my

[1] *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson, Barrister-at-Law, F.S.A.* Selected and Edited by Thomas Sadler, Ph.D. In Three Volumes. London, 1869.

old friend (I think I may call Mr. Robinson my old friend, for though he *thought* me a modern youth, I *did* know him twenty years)—perhaps, I say, it was his modesty which made me nervous about his memoirs more than anything else. I have so often heard him say (and say it with a vigour of emphasis which is rarer in our generation even than in his),—"Sir, I have no literary talent. I cannot write. I never *could* write anything, and I never *would* write anything,"—that being so taught, and so vehemently, I came to believe. And there was this to justify my creed. The notes Mr. Robinson used to scatter about him—and he was fond of writing rather elaborate ones—were not always very good. At least they were too long for the busy race of the present generation, and introduced Schiller and Goethe where they need not have appeared. But in these memoirs (especially in the Reminiscences and the Diary; for the moment he gets to a letter the style is worse) the words flow with such an effectual simplicity, that even Southey, the great master of such prose, could hardly have written better. Possibly it was his real interest in his old stories which preserved Mr. Robinson; in his letters he was not so interested and he fell into words and amplifications; but in those ancient anecdotes, which for years were his life and being, the style, as it seems to me, could scarcely be mended even in a word. And though, undoubtedly, the book is much too long in the latter half, I do not blame Dr. Sadler, the editor and biographer, for it, or indeed blame any one. Mr. Robinson had led a very long and very varied life, and some of his old friends had an interest in one part of his reminiscences and some in another. An unhappy editor entrusted with "a deceased's papers" cannot really and in practice omit much that any surviving friends much want to have put in. One man calls with a letter "in which my dear and honoured friend gave me advice that was of such

inestimable value, I hope, I cannot but think, you will find room for it". And another calls with memoranda of a dinner—a most "superior occasion," as they say in the North—at which, he reports, "there was conversation to which I never, or scarcely ever, heard anything equal. There were A. B. and C. D. and E. F., all masters, as you remember, of the purest conversational eloquence; surely I need not hesitate to believe that you will say something of that dinner." And so an oppressed biographer has to serve up the crumbs of ancient feasts, though well knowing in his heart that they are crumbs, and though he feels, too, that the critics will attack him, and cruelly say it is his fault. But remembering this, and considering that Mr. Robinson wrote a diary beginning in 1811, going down to 1867, and occupying thirty-five closely written volumes, and that there were "Reminiscences" and vast unsorted papers, I think Dr. Sadler has managed admirably well. His book is brief to what it might have been, and all his own part is written with delicacy, feeling and knowledge. He quotes, too, from Wordsworth by way of motto—

> "A man he seems of cheerful yesterdays
> And confident to-morrows; with a face
> Not worldly minded, for it bears too much
> A nation's impress,—gaiety and health,
> Freedom and hope;—but keen withal and shrewd:
> His gestures note,—and, hark, his tones of voice
> Are all vivacious as his mien and looks".[1]

It was a happy feeling for Mr. Robinson's character that selected these lines to stand at the beginning of his memoirs.

And yet in one material respect—in this case perhaps the most material respect—Dr. Sadler has failed, and not

[1] "Excursion," book vii.

in the least from any fault of his. Sydney Smith used to complain that "no one had ever made him his trustee or executor"; being really a very sound and sensible man of business, he felt that it was a kind of imputation on him, and that he was not appreciated. But some one more justly replied, "But how could *you*, Sydney Smith, expect to be made an executor? Is there any one who wants their 'remains' to be made fun of?" Now every trustee of biographical papers is exactly in this difficulty, that he cannot make fun. The melancholy friends who left the papers would not at all like it. And, besides, there grows upon every such biographer an "official" feeling—a confused sense of vague responsibilities—a wish not to impair the gravity of the occasion or to offend any one by levity. But there are some men who cannot be justly described quite gravely; and Crabb Robinson is one of them. A certain grotesqueness was a part of him, and, unless you liked it, you lost the very best of him. He is called, and properly called, in these memoirs Mr. Robinson; but no well-judging person ever called him so in life. He was always called "old Crabb," and that is the only name which will ever bring up his curious image to me. He was, in the true old English sense of the word, a "character"; one whom a very peculiar life, certainly, and perhaps also a rather peculiar nature to begin with, had formed and moulded into something so exceptional and singular that it did not seem to belong to ordinary life, and almost caused a smile when you saw it moving there. "An aberrant form," I believe, the naturalists call the seal and such things in natural history; odd shapes that can only be explained by a long past, and which swim with a certain incongruity in their present *milieu*. Now "old Crabb" was (to me at least) just like that. You watched with interest and pleasure his singular gestures, and his

odd way of saying things, and muttered, as if to keep up the recollection, "And *this* is the man who was the friend of Goethe, and is the friend of Wordsworth!" There was a certain animal oddity about "old Crabb," which made it a kind of mental joke to couple him with such great names, and yet he was to his heart's core thoroughly coupled with them. If you leave out all his strange ways (I do not say Dr. Sadler has quite left them out, but to some extent he has been obliged, by place and decorum, to omit them), you lose the life of the man. You cut from the Ethiopian his skin, and from the leopard his spots. I well remember poor Clough, who was then fresh from Oxford, and was much puzzled by the corner of London to which he had drifted, looking at "old Crabb" in a kind of terror for a whole breakfast time, and muttering in mute wonder, almost to himself, as he came away, "Not at all the regular patriarch". And certainly no one could accuse Mr. Robinson of an insipid regularity either in face or nature.

Mr. Robinson was one of the original founders of University College, and was for many years both on its senate and council; and as he lived near the college he was fond of collecting at breakfast all the elder students—especially those who had any sort of interest in literature. Probably he never appeared to so much advantage, or showed all the best of his nature, so well as in those parties. Like most very cheerful old people, he at heart preferred the company of the very young; and a set of young students, even after he was seventy, suited him better as society than a set of grave old men. Sometimes, indeed, he would invite—I do not say some of his contemporaries, few of them even in 1847 were up to breakfast parties, but persons of fifty and sixty — those whom young students call old gentlemen. And it was amusing to watch the consternation of some of

them at the surprising youth and levity of their host. They shuddered at the freedom with which we treated him. Middle-aged men, of feeble heads and half-made reputations, have a nice dislike to the sharp arguments and the unsparing jests of "boys at college"; they cannot bear the rough society of those who, never having tried their own strength, have not yet acquired a fellow-feeling for weakness. Many such persons, I am sure, were half hurt with Mr. Robinson for not keeping those "impertinent boys" more at a just distance; but Mr. Robinson liked fun and movement, and disliked the sort of dignity which shelters stupidity. There was little to gratify the unintellectual part of man at these breakfasts, and what there was was not easy to be got at. Your host, just as you were sitting down to breakfast, found he had forgotten to make the tea, then he could not find his keys, then he rang the bell to have them searched for; but long before the servant came he had gone off into "Schiller-Goethe," and could not the least remember what he had wanted. The more astute of his guests used to breakfast before they came, and then there was much interest in seeing a steady literary man, who did not understand the region, in agonies at having to hear three stories before he got his tea, one again between his milk and his sugar, another between his butter and his toast, and additional zest in making a stealthy inquiry that was sure to intercept the coming delicacies by bringing on Schiller and Goethe.

It is said in these memoirs that Mr. Robinson's parents were very good-looking, and that when married they were called the handsome couple. But in his old age very little regular beauty adhered to him, if he ever had any. His face was pleasing from its animation, its kindness, and its shrewdness, but the nose was one of the most slovenly which nature had ever turned out, and the chin of excessive

length, with portentous power of extension. But, perhaps, for the purpose of a social narrator (and in later years this was Mr. Robinson's position), this oddity of feature was a gift. It was said, and justly said, that Lord Brougham used to punctuate his sentences with his nose; just at the end of a long parenthesis he *could*, and did, turn up his nose, which served to note the change of subject as well, or better, than a printed mark. Mr. Robinson was not so skilful as this, but he made a very able use of the chin at a conversational crisis, and just at the point of a story pushed it out, and then very slowly drew it in again, so that you always knew when to laugh, and the oddity of the gesture helped you in laughing.

Mr. Robinson had known nearly every literary man worth knowing in England and Germany for fifty years and more. He had studied at Jena in the "great time," when Goethe, and Schiller, and Wieland were all at their zenith; he had lived with Charles Lamb and his set, and Rogers and his set, besides an infinite lot of little London people; he had taught Madame de Staël German philosophy in Germany, and helped her in business afterwards in England; he was the real friend of Wordsworth, and had known Coleridge and Southey almost from their "coming out" to their death. And he was not a mere literary man. He had been a *Times* correspondent in the days of Napoleon's early German battles, now more than "seventy years since"; he had been off Corunna in Sir John Moore's time; and last, but almost first it should have been, he was an English barrister who had for years a considerable business, and who was full of picturesque stories about old judges. Such a varied life and experience belong to very few men, and his social nature—at once accessible and assailant—was just the one to take advantage of it. He seemed to be lucky all through: in childhood he remembered when John Gilpin

came out; then he had seen—he could not hear—John Wesley preach; then he had heard Erskine, and criticised him intelligently, in some of the finest of the well-known "State trials"; and so on during all his vigorous period.

I do not know that it would be possible to give a better idea of Mr. Robinson's best conversations than by quoting almost at random from the earlier part of these memoirs:—

"At the spring assizes of 1791, when I had nearly attained my sixteenth year, I had the delight of hearing Erskine. It was a high enjoyment, and I was able to profit by it. The subject of the trial was the validity of a will—Braham *v.* Rivett. Erskine came down specially retained for the plaintiff, and Mingay for the defendant. The trial lasted two days. The title of the heir being admitted, the proof of the will was gone into at once. I have a recollection of many of the circumstances after more than fifty-four years; but of nothing do I retain so perfect a recollection as of the figure and voice of Erskine. There was a charm in his voice, a fascination in his eye; and so completely had he won my affection, that I am sure had the verdict been given against him I should have burst out crying. Of the facts and of the evidence, I do not pretend to recollect anything beyond my impressions and sensations. My pocket-book records that Erskine was engaged two and a half hours in opening the case, and Mingay two hours and twenty minutes in his speech in defence. E.'s reply occupied three hours. The testatrix was an old lady in a state of imbecility. The evil spirit of the case was an attorney. Mingay was loud and violent, and gave Erskine an opportunity of turning into ridicule his imagery and illustrations. For instance, M. having compared R. to the Devil going into the Garden of Eden, E. drew a closer parallel than M. intended. Satan's first sight of Eve was related in Milton's words—

> "'Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
> In every gesture dignity and love';[1]

and then a picture of idiotcy from Swift was contrasted. But the sentence that weighed on my spirits was a pathetic exclamation—'If, gentlemen, you should by your verdict annihilate an instrument so solemnly framed, *I should retire a troubled man from this court*'. And as he uttered the word *court*, he beat his breast and I had a difficulty in

[1] "Paradise Lost," book viii.

not crying out. When in bed the following night I awoke several times in a state of excitement approaching fever—the words '*troubled man from this court*' rang in my ears.

"A new trial was granted, and ultimately the will was set aside. I have said I profited by Erskine. I remarked his great artifice, if I may call it so; and in a small way I afterwards practised it. It lay in his frequent repetitions. He had one or two leading arguments and main facts on which he was constantly dwelling. But then he had marvellous skill in varying his phraseology, so that no one was sensible of tautology in the expressions. Like the doubling of a hare, he was perpetually coming to his old place. Other great advocates I have remarked were ambitious of a great variety of arguments.

"About the same time that I thus first heard the most perfect of forensic orators, I was also present at an exhibition equally admirable, and which had a powerful effect upon my mind. It was, I believe, in October, 1790, and not long before his death, that I heard John Wesley in the great round meeting-house at Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up, having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible. But his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind I never saw anything comparable to it in after life."[1]

And again:—

"It was at the summer circuit that Rolfe made his first appearance. He had been at the preceding sessions. I have a pleasure in recollecting that I at once foresaw that he would become a distinguished man. In my Diary I wrote, 'Our new junior, Mr. Rolfe, made his appearance. His manners are genteel; his conversation easy and sensible. He is a very acceptable companion, but I fear a dangerous rival.' And my brother asking me who the new man was, I said, 'I will venture to predict that you will live to see that young man attain a higher rank than any one you ever saw upon the circuit'. It is true he is not higher than Leblanc, who was also a puisne judge, but Leblanc was never Solicitor-General; nor, probably, is Rolfe yet at the end of his career. One day, when some one remarked, 'Christianity is part and parcel of the law

[1] Vol. i., chap. ii.

of the land,' Rolfe said to me, 'Were you ever employed to draw an indictment against a man for not loving his neighbour as himself?'

"Rolfe is, by universal repute, if not the very best, at least one of the best judges on the Bench. He is one of the few with whom I have kept up an acquaintance."[1]

Of course, these stories came over and over again. It is the excellence of a reminiscent to have a few good stories, and his misfortune that people will remember what he says. In Mr. Robinson's case an unskilled person could often see the anecdote somewhere impending, and there was often much interest in trying whether you could ward it off or not. There was one great misfortune which had happened to his guests, though he used to tell it as one of the best things that had ever happened to himself. He had picked up a certain bust of Wieland by Schadow, which it appears had been lost, and in the finding of which Goethe, even Goethe, rejoiced. After a very long interval I still shudder to think how often I have heard that story; it was one which no skill or care could long avert, for the thing stood opposite our host's chair, and the sight of it was sure to recall him. Among the ungrateful students to whom he was so kind, the first question always asked of any one who had breakfasted at his house was, "Did you undergo the *bust?*"

A reader of these memoirs would naturally and justly think that the great interest of Mr. Robinson's conversation

[1] "Since writing the above, Baron Rolfe has verified my prediction more strikingly by being created a peer, by the title of Lord Cranworth, and appointed a Vice-Chancellor. Soon after his appointment, he called on me, and I dined with him. I related to Lady Cranworth the anecdote given above, of my conversation with my brother, with which she was evidently pleased. Lady Cranworth was the daughter of Mr. Carr, Solicitor to the Excise, whom I formerly used to visit, and ought soon to find some mention of in my journals. Lord Cranworth continues to enjoy universal respect.—H. C. R., 1851."

was the strength of the past memory; but quite as amusing or more so was the present weakness. He never could remember names, and was very ingenious in his devices to elude the defect. There is a story in these memoirs:—

"I was engaged to dine with Mr. Wansey at Walthamstow. When I arrived there I was in the greatest distress, through having forgotten his name. And it was not till after half an hour's worry that I recollected he was a Unitarian, which would answer as well; for I instantly proceeded to Mr. Cogan's. Having been shown into a room, young Mr. Cogan came—'Your commands, sir?'—'Mr. Cogan, I have taken the liberty to call on you in order to know where I am to dine to-day.' He smiled. I went on: 'The truth is, I have accepted an invitation to dine with a gentleman, a recent acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten; but I am sure you can tell me, for he is a Unitarian, and the Unitarians are very few here'."[1]

And at his breakfasts it was always the same; he was always in difficulty as to some person's name or other, and he had regular descriptions which recurred, like Homeric epithets, and which he expected you to apply to the individual. Thus poor Clough always appeared—"That admirable and accomplished man. You know whom I mean. The one who never says anything." And of another living poet he used to say: "Probably the most able, and certainly the most consequential, of all the young persons I know. You know which it is. The one with whom I could never *presume* to be intimate. The one whose father I knew so many years." And another particular friend of my own always occurred as —"That great friend of yours that has been in Germany—that most accomplished and interesting person—that most able and excellent young man. Sometimes I like him, and sometimes I *hate* him. You," turning to me, "know whom I mean, you villain!" And certainly I did know; for I had heard the same adjectives, and been referred to in the same manner very many times.

[1] Vol. ii., chap. vi.

Of course, a main part of Mr. Robinson's conversation was on literary subjects; but of this, except when it related to persons whom he had known, or sonnets to "the conception of which he was privy," I do not think it would be just to speak very highly. He spoke sensibly and clearly—he could not on any subject speak otherwise; but the critical faculty is as special and as peculiar almost as the poetical; and Mr. Robinson in serious moments was quite aware of it, and he used to deny that he had the former faculty more than the latter. He used to read much of Wordsworth to me; but I doubt—though many of his friends will think I am a great heretic—I doubt if he read the best poems; and even those he did read (and he read very well) rather suffered from coming in the middle of a meal, and at a time when you wanted to laugh and not to meditate. Wordsworth was a solitary man, and it is only in solitude that his best poems, or indeed any of his characteristic poems, can be truly felt or really apprehended. There are some at which I never look, even now, without thinking of the wonderful and dreary faces which Clough used to make while Mr. Robinson was reading them. To Clough certain of Wordsworth's poems were part of his inner being, and he suffered at hearing them obtruded at mealtimes, just as a High Churchman would suffer at hearing the collects of the Church. Indeed, these poems were among the collects of Clough's Church.

Still less do I believe that there is any special value in the expositions of German philosophy in these volumes, or that there was any in those which Mr. Robinson used to give on such matters in conversation. They are clear, no doubt, and accurate; but they are not the expositions of a born metaphysician. He speaks in these memoirs of his having a difficulty in concentrating his "attention on works of speculation". And such books as Kant can only be really mastered, can perhaps only be usefully studied, by those

who have an unusual facility in concentrating their mind on impalpable abstractions, and an uncommon inclination to do so. Mr. Robinson had neither; and I think the critical philosophy had really very little effect on him, and had, during the busy years which have elapsed since he studied it, very nearly run off him. There was something very curious in the sudden way that anything mystical would stop in him. At the end of a Sunday breakfast, after inflicting on you much which was transcendental in Wordsworth or Goethe, he would say, as we left him, with an air of relish, "Now I am going to run down to Essex Street to hear Madge. I shall not be in time for the prayers; but I do not so much care about that; what I do like is the sermon; it is so clear." Mr. Madge was a Unitarian of the old school, with as little mystical and transcendental in his nature as any one who ever lived. There was a living piquancy in the friend of Goethe—the man who *would* explain to you his writings—being also the admirer of "Madge"; it was like a proser, lengthily eulogising Kant to you, and then saying, "Ah! but I do love Condillac; he is so clear".

But, on the other hand, I used to hold—I was reading law at the time, and so had some interest in the matter—that Mr. Robinson much underrated his legal knowledge, and his practical power as a lawyer. What he used to say was, "I never knew any law, sir, but I knew the practice. . . . I left the bar because I feared my incompetence might be discovered. I was a tolerable junior; but I was rising to be a leader, which I was unfit to be; and so I retired, not to disgrace myself by some fearful mistake." In these memoirs he says that he retired when he had made the sum of money which he thought enough for a bachelor with few wants and not a single expensive taste. The simplicity of this tastes is certain; very few Englishmen indeed could

live with so little show or pretence. But the idea of his gross incompetence is absurd. No one who was incompetent ever said so. There are, I am sure, plenty of substantial and well-satisfied men at the English bar who do not know nearly as much law as Mr. Robinson knew, and who have not a tithe of his sagacity, but who believe in themselves, and in whom their clients believe. On the other hand Mr. Robinson had many great qualifications for success at the bar. He was a really good speaker: when over seventy I have heard him make a speech that good speakers in their full vigour would be glad to make. He had a good deal of the actor in his nature, which is thought, and I fancy justly thought, to be necessary to the success of all great advocates, and perhaps of all great orators. He was well acquainted with the petty technicalities which intellectual men in middle life in general cannot learn, for he had passed some years in an attorney's office. Above all, he was a very thinking man, and had an "idea of business"—that inscrutable something which at once and altogether distinguishes the man who is safe in the affairs of life from those who are unsafe. I do not suppose he knew much black-letter law; but there are plenty of judges on the bench who, unless they are much belied, also know very little—perhaps none. And a man who can intelligently read Kant, like Mr. Robinson, need not fear the book-work of English law. A very little serious study would have taught him law enough to lead the Norfolk circuit. He really had a sound, moderate, money-making business, and only a little pains was wanted to give him more.

The real reason why he did not take the trouble, I fancy, was that, being a bachelor, he was a kind of amateur in life, and did not really care. He could not spend what he had on himself, and used to give away largely, though in private. And even more, as with most men who have not thoroughly worked when young, daily, regular industry was

exceedingly trying to him. No man could be less idle; far from it, he was always doing something; but then he was doing what he chose. Sir Walter Scott, one of the best workers of his time, used always to say that "he had no temptation to be idle, but the greatest temptation, when one thing was wanted of him, to go and do something else". Perhaps the only persons who, not being forced by mere necessity, really conquer this temptation, are those who were early broken to the yoke, and are fixed to the furrow by habit. Mr. Robinson loitered in Germany, so he was not one of these.

I am not regretting this. It would be a base idolatry of practical life, to require every man to succeed in it as far as he could, and to devote to it all his mind. The world certainly does not need it; it pays well, and it will never lack good servants. There will always be enough of sound, strong men to be working barristers and judges, let who will object to become so. But I own I think a man ought to be able to be a "Philistine" if he chooses; there is a sickly incompleteness about people too fine for the world, and too nice to work their way in it. And when a man like Mr. Robinson had a real sagacity for affairs, it is for those who respect his memory to see that his reputation does not suffer from his modesty, and that his habitual self-depreciations—which, indeed, extended to his powers of writing as well as to those of acting—are not taken to be exactly true.

In fact, Mr. Robinson was usefully occupied in University College business and University Hall business, and other such things. But there is no special need to write on them in connection with his name; and it would need a good deal of writing to make them intelligible to those who do not know them now. And the greater part of his life was spent in society where his influence was always

manly and vigorous. I do not mean that he was universally popular; it would be defacing his likeness to say so. "I am a man," he once told me, "to whom a great number of persons entertain the very strongest objection." Indeed he had some subjects on which he could hardly bear opposition. Twice he nearly quarrelled with me: once for writing in favour of Louis Napoleon, which, as he had caught in Germany a thorough antipathy to the first Napoleon, seemed to him quite wicked; and next for my urging that Hazlitt was a much greater writer than Charles Lamb—a harmless opinion which I still hold, but which Mr. Robinson met with this outburst: "You, sir, YOU prefer the works of that scoundrel, that odious, that malignant writer, to the exquisite essays of that angelic creature!" I protested that there was no evidence that angels could write particularly well; but it was in vain, and it was some time before he forgave me. Some persons who casually encountered peculiarities like these, did not always understand them. In his last years, too, augmenting infirmities almost disqualified Mr. Robinson for general society, and quite disabled him from showing his old abilities in it. Indeed, I think that these memoirs will give almost a new idea of his power to many young men who had only seen him casually, and at times of feebleness. After ninety it is not easy to make new friends. And, in any case, this book will always have a great charm for those who knew Mr. Robinson well when they were themselves young, because it will keep alive for them the image of his buoyant sagacity, and his wise and careless kindness.

BAD LAWYERS OR GOOD?

(1870.)

After many years' delay a movement is, I understand, now beginning for the reform in legal education. To those who have looked at the matter, it is strange that this change has been delayed so long. Oxford has been changed and reformed with strange completeness; Eton is being reformed, and we may hope it will be with equal completeness. Our great seats of ordinary education have been more or less made to educate in our sense of education. But the Inns of Court are still unreformed; with slight exceptions, they still go their own way. Their great funds are nearly useless for education. Magnificent corporations as they are, the English barrister would, in all intellectual culture, and even in all gentlemanly discipline, be pretty much the same if they did not exist. It is not that the exposure has been defective. Fifteen years ago a very good Commission explored the whole subject. No doubt the reason is, that the mass of people do not think it matters at all to them. They think that it concerns lawyers only; and that, if the lawyers do not care to change their own education, probably it does not need change; or, at any rate, no common person need see to it. And this is my motive and my excuse for writing on the subject. If it were necessary to discuss Roman law, or abstract jurisprudence, or the effect of these great subjects as educational disciplines, I should have to be silent. Crowds of persons could teach them far better than I could. But it seems to me that the public mind, so far as it thinks of legal education at all, thinks of it too exclusively in connection

with these high topics. The reforming movement has been weak because people in general do not see how it would help them. Some men may wish that some other men may know some Roman law, but they do not wish it with intense eagerness. There is no popular contagion in scholastic sentiments. The only way much to interest the public is to show the public that it is much hurt, and therefore it is that I want to try a short and practical way of treating this subject.

"At Oxford," said Lord Eldon, "the degree examination was a farce in my time. I was asked who founded University College; and I replied, 'King Alfred,' though I believe this is often doubted. No other questions were asked me, and this was all the examination." Careful sceptics I believe say that this anecdote is or may be exaggerated; they think that the aged Chancellor exaggerated the inefficiency of his favourite University. But be that as it may, the process of giving the Oxford degree, as Lord Eldon describes it, was not a bit worse than the Lincoln's Inn way of giving its degree of "Barrister" twenty years ago. The process was then this: All the students dined in Hall during term, and the only attempt on the part of the Inn to test or augment our legal knowledge consisted in certain exercises, which we had to "keep," as it was called, in due rotation. Though it is so short a time ago, people now-a-days will hardly believe what those exercises were. A slip of paper was delivered to you, written in legible law-stationer's hand, which you were to take up to the upper table, where the Benchers sat, and read before them. The contents were generally not intelligible: the slip often began in the middle of a sentence, and by long copying and by no revision the text had become quite corrupt. The topic was "Whether C should have the widow's estate?" and it was said that if you pieced all the slips together you might make a connected

argument for and against the widow. In old time I suppose there used to be regular "moot," or debate, before the Benchers, in which the students took part, and in which the Benchers judged of their competency. Probably this sort of examination, by publicly putting a nice case and publicly arguing it, was very effectual. But in 1850 the trial "case" had dwindled down to the everlasting question, "Whether C should have the widow's estate?" The animated debate had become a mechanical reading of copied bits of paper, which it was difficult to read without laughing. Indeed, the Benchers felt the farce, and wanted to expedite it. If you kept a grave countenance after you had read some six words, the senior Bencher would say, "Sir, that will do"; and then the exercise was kept. But this favour was only given to those who showed due gravity. If you laughed you had to read the "slip" all through.

All established customs will find grave people to defend them, and ingenious reasons are soon found for them. Even "exercises" used to be defended. It was said "to be essential that only gentlemen should be called to the Bar; and that, when a man kept his exercise, the Benchers could see whether he was a gentleman or not". But as no student was ever rejected for bad looks—as indeed some very refined men are not always very refined-looking—and as some of the Benchers themselves had certainly a singular aspect, it was not easy to acquiesce in this. Still there was a traditional sentiment that a man who had kept an exercise "had done a good work," of which the use might be real, though not apparent. Indeed, there was some sort of motive for maintaining that feeling. No one likes to admit that a magnificent and an ancient institution, from which he gains glory, is a mere "sham" and empty appearance. But a student of Lincoln's Inn had to admit that, or defend "exercises". This occasional reading of a few words in an unintelligible

document was all which your splendid "Inn" vouchsafed you; and if that was once conceded to be futile, the whole "Inn" must be pronounced useless. Even "exercises," therefore, had their defenders, as every old thing has which is connected with a corporate power.

Such was studentship at Lincoln's Inn twenty years ago. At our call to the Bar, we kept a last "exercise" (still on the old suit of C and the widow), and we presented comfits to the Benchers' wives, but of any attempt to test our competency for our profession, or our fitness for the many posts monopolised by it, there was no trace or suggestion.

Since that time, however, there have been several changes. A vague feeling ran through society that the Inns of Court did not "look right"; if you wanted to prove their usefulness, the argument was difficult; the first impression on every listening mind was adverse; Lord Westbury and other reformers were stirring within the Inns; so "something" was done. And it was done in the natural way of those who think the present perfect, but fear that unless they do something they will not be able to keep the present long. As little in reality was changed as possible, but as much as possible was changed in appearance. The comforts of antiquity were retained, and yet, as far as might be, decent answers were provided for the unpleasant questions of the new world. Lectures were provided, and an examination previous to the call to the Bar was begun. But unfortunately these novelties were erected on the alternative: A student may *either* pass an examination, or else he must attend lectures. And this is surely very absurd. At present the natural idea is that an educational body should found lectures to teach, and examinations to see whether those lectures have been efficient. But the Inns of Court say, "No; we will examine, and we will teach;

but we need not do both to the same persons. If some students attend lectures, that shall be enough; and if some pass an examination, that shall be enough. To examine those who have already attended lectures would be impertinent; it would seem as if we doubted whether they had learnt from those lectures or not." Not long ago, however, I met a barrister and county magistrate whose legal attainments I much suspected; so I asked him: "How did you get through the Bar examination?" "Oh," he said, "I was not examined: I attended lectures." "And were the lectures good?" I asked again. "Oh," he said, "I do not know about that: I did not listen much. I read *Punch*, and that sort of thing." There is no examination to keep out incompetent barristers, and lectures only really teach those who really attend.

No doubt there is a most efficient education for the Bar, but that education is entirely independent of the Inns. If no call at all were wanted; if, as at Rome, any one could practise at the Bar who liked, their education would be just as efficient as it is now. Students read, as it is called, three years or more in the "chambers" of a conveyancer and a special pleader and an equity draftsman. But they are not called to the Bar by virtue of this, or because of their having profited by it. Any one who has not "read" is called just as easily as those who have. Before the Commission several witnesses (Lord Cairns was one) very sensibly insisted on the excellence of the present system. A student sees in chambers, it was said, real business; he has real transactions to study; he sees how other people cope with them; he is not trained on theory, or on the A B C notions of books; he sees actual facts as they occur in the various real world. And there is no answer to these arguments. Undoubtedly the study of real business is an indispensable part of legal education; if you had the choice

whether to give up that or everything else but that, you had better keep that. Real business will train you in some degree without other help; but without seeing real business you cannot be trained at all. But then, for what purpose are the Inns of Court? They show you no real business, and do not pretend to show you any. If attendance at chambers alone qualifies for the Bar, why should not any person who has so attended at chambers be called to the Bar? Why should he have to enter at an Inn of Court at all? The defenders of the Inns say, "No doubt they do not educate, but then some one else educates". But then we should not attend to them; we should attend only to the real educator.

But though the Inns of Court are so inefficient in education, they are exceedingly efficient in finance. The following were their incomes as given by the Commission of 1855:—

Inner Temple	£21,168
Middle ,, ...	10,192
Lincoln's Inn	18,242
Gray's Inn	8,343
	£57,945

No doubt some of this is raised from the rent of old buildings which require an unusual annual outlay, but still there is a vast income—over £40,000—which, except an annual trifle for the library, is all spent uselessly. About £15,000 is spent every year on the dinners for the students, and more than £6000 on establishment charges, besides "miscellaneous" items. The Inns are, in fact, legal clubs; and bad legal clubs, for they dine at a bad hour, much earlier than any one now wishes to dine; and all the arrangements are stiff and inconvenient, since they are regulated, not by a freely-elected body, but by a self-electing committee of old gentlemen.

There is a floating idea that these Inns secure the sociability of the students and Bar. But there is little enough of that in dinners where people speak little unless they are introduced; and if sociability be really what is wished, the Inns should further develop the club idea, and should establish a "smoking-room".

A considerable part of the incomes of the Inns is levied by fees from the members of the Inns and from the students. They have dues for commons—that is, dinners—which you must pay whether you dine or not, with many intricate fees beside; and in levying these taxes, the Inns used to exhibit —there has very lately been a partial modification—a tenacity and firmness which might move the admiration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed, Mr. Lowe has given us his opinion on it. "One other matter," he said in 1855, "I would take leave to mention. I am a member of Lincoln's Inn; I went to Australia without, I am afraid, thinking about my commons; and when I returned, after eight years' absence, I was welcomed back to my native land by a bill of £48 for my absence from commons. Of that, however, I do not complain; it was my own oversight. I paid the bill, not wishing my sureties to be annoyed; and then I thought I had paid enough. At last, when I ceased to be a practising barrister, I made an application to see whether I might not be allowed to cease to pay, as in the case at the University; but I was informed that there was no means of my being so, but that I must pay for the term of my natural life. Now I think that is a great hardship." The Inns of Court are, in fact, Clubs of Court, and till recently with the bad peculiarity, that if you once got into them, you could never get out. A member was obliged to continue his subscriptions for ever.

A greater abuse than the Inns of Court, or so great an abuse, probably does not now exist in England. They could

only be endured in a country tenacious of ancient things, even the most lifeless. They figure in legal education, not because of their efficiency, but because of their size. Though they do nothing, they look as if they ought to do something. But for practical purposes, we must look to the reading in chambers, and see what that is, and what is likely to be the effect of it.

And the most remarkable thing about it is, that it is not "reading" at all. Many English things are called by some word which means exactly what those things are not, and so here. Reading law with a barrister ought to mean that the barrister read some law-book or statute with you, instructed you in it, pointed out things which might escape you, and gave in each case a kind of lecture. But the barrister does nothing of the sort. He is a very busy man, with as much business as he can get through; and in general it would be very much out of his way to give any sort of formal pupil lecture. What happens is this: A heap of papers is set before each pupil, and according to such light as he possesses, and with perhaps a little preliminary explanation, the pupil is set to prepare the document for which these papers were sent—in a special pleader's chambers, a plea to be used in a court of common law; in an equity draftsman's, a plea for a court of equity; in a conveyancer's, probably some deed relating to real property. A precedent is set before each pupil, out of which he is to copy the formal part, which is always much the same in such documents, especially in the easier ones set before the younger pupils. As to all the non-formal part, the first precept given to a beginner is one not so much of deep jurisprudence as of simple practice. He is told to "write wide," which means that the lines of the pupil's writing should always be at so great a distance from each other that the preceptor should have ample room to strike them out if

he pleased, and write his own words in between them. And of this room he largely avails himself. Not long ago an advocate was contending that the alterations in a draft implied a deep design, on which the presiding judge said: "When I was in chambers, the conveyancer I was with used *always* to scratch out *all* I wrote, and write something of his own instead". Of course this was a playful exaggeration; but there is no doubt that at first younger pupils blunder dreadfully, and that what they write at great pains to themselves is, except in the formal parts of the document, quite useless. Gradually, however, by many failures, able men who work well learn much that is very valuable, and benefit both their teacher and themselves.

Lord Cranworth, I have been told, used to say that the most instructive part of his education—I believe he spoke not only of his legal but of his general training—was that which he spent in a special pleader's office. And perhaps, as an introduction for a studious mind (such as Lord Cranworth's was, no doubt) to the actual business of life, such an office could not be made much better. The documents to be prepared were usually short, so that the pupil got a good variety. They were all based on the mistakes of life, and each showed how easily business went wrong, and how difficult it was to keep it right. You saw the law, as it were, in rapid motion; for there was a quick litigation going forward, which presented sharp issues to be decided or settled in a month or two. No doubt there was much pure nonsense taught also. Such refined follies as special demurrers and the replication *de injuria* are hardly intelligible to younger men. But, side by side with much antiquated absurdity, there was a great deal more of healthy fresh business, which to men from college is enormously instructive, and is what they most want. And the mode of tuition was not cold and formal. It consisted in discussing

with your fellow-pupils and your teacher the actual points as they turn up on the actual living cases. Unless a man be destitute both of legal capacity and of business capacity, he must in such a school learn much law and much business. If you could educate the higher classes by compulsion, I would require all young legislators and all young magistrates to go through this training. It would stop unnumbered proposals of nonsense in Parliament, and much minor folly at petty sessions.

But admirable as is this training within its limits, still it *has* limits. There is a serious objection to it, which applies also to the conveyancer's chambers and to the equity draftsman's. The education they give is fresh, but it is also "patchy". Each set of papers teaches the learner one particular lesson, but there is nothing to combine the lessons together; each case has its peculiar instruction, but the instruction of each is separate; there is nothing to join the lesson of one case to that of another. The whole course of education is "discontinuous". Point No. I. is not explained in relation to point No. II., nor point No. II. in its relation to point No. III. The student—at least, in many cases—leaves chambers with a very vivid image of many particular instances, but he hardly knows how to connect those instances together. He is deficient in binding central doctrine. What has been set before him is a rich assortment of unselected transactions, and from each of these he has learnt something. But he feels—at least many have felt—that the knowledge so acquired is something like a knowledge of each separate island in the Pacific Ocean, without any knowledge of the configuration of that ocean itself. He has a mental picture of many clear images, but he does not know how they stand one against another, or what there is between them.

However good, therefore, education in chambers may be,

we must carefully observe what it is: it is an education by means of unselected transactions, set before the pupil's mind without arrangement, and out of which he has to make a system for himself if he is to have arrangement at all, and which he may leave disconnected in his mind if, like many, he scarcely knows the value of digested principle and well-arranged thought. And this is the whole education that most barristers receive.

But the education of barristers is not the only legal education in this country. It is not even the education of the larger half of the legal profession. There are less than five thousand barristers in England, and more than ten thousand solicitors. And what is curious is, that the principle of the whole legal education changes when you get to the lower half, as it is called, of the profession, and changes in exactly the reverse way to what you would expect. One might imagine that, as the duties of an attorney require less actual legal learning than those of a barrister; as he is excluded from all the best places which barristers monopolise; as his voice cannot be heard in a superior court; as he is obliged to employ a barrister to speak for him,—his education would be rather neglected by law, and that of the barrister more heeded. The sort of lawyer sedulously patronised would presumably have been more carefully tested, and shown to be qualified, than the other kind of lawyer, who is sedulously set down and made inferior. But, in fact, the case is just the reverse. As we have seen, a man who knows no law, and who has never tried to know law, has no difficulty in becoming a barrister. There is no kind of fence to keep him out. But such a man could never become an attorney. The law has made rigorous requirements for the legal knowledge of the "little lawyer," though it has made no requirements at all for the legal knowledge of the "big lawyer". In inverse proportion to the magnitude of the importance

conferred is the care taken by the law to know that this importance is deserved.

"A person," says Mr. Jevons, "intending to become an attorney or solicitor, before being selected, is required—unless he be a university graduate, or have passed one of certain university examinations—to pass a preliminary examination, showing that he has received a liberal education; he is thereon articled for five years (unless a graduate of one of the universities, or a barrister, in which case the term is reduced to three; or he has passed one of certain university examinations, in which case the term is reduced to four), of which term one year may be spent in the chambers of a barrister, or special pleader. And if articled in the country, one year of any of the said term may be passed in the office of a London attorney. He has, during the term, to pass an intermediate examination in the law; and, finally, to pass a severe examination before he is admitted in the five branches of conveyancing, common law, equity, bankruptcy, and criminal law,—of which he must pass in the first three branches."[1] Of course, having passed this stiff examination, it is expressly provided that an attorney cannot, while he is such, even begin to keep terms to be a barrister; not only he cannot act as one, but he cannot even begin to eat dinners to become one.

But it may be replied,—"Granting that what you say is true, that legal education is deficient in some cases, that the least taught are the most privileged, that the best taught are under the worst disadvantages, yet how does this hurt us? How are common people injured by it? Is it not a matter affecting lawyers only?" I answer that these faults much injure the mass of mankind—that they make the law

[1] See a very able paper by W. A. Jevons, of Liverpool, on "The Relation between the Two Branches of the Legal Profession," read before the Law Society of Liverpool.

uncertain, and that they keep it uncertain—that they make the law bad, and that they keep it bad.

In the first place—to a litigant—the division of a profession into two halves is a calamity. A considerate person naturally wishes to understand why his case is right, if it is right; and why it is wrong, if it is wrong. Most men are more interested in their lawsuits than in anything else, and would be glad, for their own guidance, to understand them if they could. But when a client, so wishing to see how and where he stands, cross-examines his attorney, he is referred to counsel at the first difficulty. The attorney says: "Sir, this is a more complex matter than I should like to advise you upon without assistance. It requires greater learning and more ability than mine: I could not pretend to give such an opinion as you ought to have on so important a transaction." And at first the client is rather pleased. He does not, perhaps, much like the cost of paying for the aid of counsel, but he is much pleased at being mixed up in matters so abstruse and important that their aid is necessary. At any rate, he now thinks that he shall fully understand his case; that he shall really know why he is fighting his suit, and be able to judge for himself whether he ought to compromise or persist in it. On this ground he readily enough consents to "take the opinion," and looks forward eagerly to receiving it. But when it comes he is almost sure to be disappointed. He finds, no doubt, a plain piece of advice that he ought to do so and so, and perhaps a categorical statement that so and so is the law; but he finds no reasons; he is obliged to believe what the oracle says; he is no nearer to a comprehension of his case than before. Nor can his solicitor help him. He says: "I am sure, sir, I cannot take it upon me to say why counsel gave that opinion; but as we have asked for it and paid for it, I suppose I must act on it". Now, if the opinion recom-

mends the spending of much money, the client may not quite like this. If he could, he would like to get hold of "counsel," and cross-examine him; he would like to treat him plainly and familiarly, as he does his attorney. He pays one and he pays the other, and he thinks he ought to get as much as he can out of both. But, in fact, he cannot. Counsel is secluded in a remote and inaccessible shrine, and you cannot effectually get at him. Even if the client gets a "conference," he has to pay for it; and counsel treats him as if he were a curious intellectual "specimen," perhaps from the provinces. Any question he may ask is answered with a kind of condescension, but counsel thinks plainly, "What nonsense it is this fellow trying to understand his own case! I am paid to speak to him, and I will speak to him, but I will not speak to him very much." And the client who has penetrated into the sacred "chambers," probably finds that he has been put off with some vague and cautious observations, which do not seem to him very consistent with each other, and all which he cannot but think *happen* to evade the worst difficulty, even if they were not meant to do so. As he comes away he calculates: "I paid so much a word for that interview, and what have I gained by it?" But it is only in the rarest cases that the client is so enterprising or so intrusive as this. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand the client never sees counsel at all. He only gets a copy of the oracular opinion from the attorney, and peruses it several times, wondering at its brevity, but still a little admiring its decision. Gradually he comes to feel a confidence in it, and is content to act on it. But when he advances some way farther in the business, and is beginning to reflect on the expense, it occurs to him as strange that if the matter is as plain as the counsel tells him it is, the other side should be proceeding with so much confidence, and not attempting to strike their

flag. Accordingly, he goes to his attorney, and asks, "How is it that the other side are not frightened? You showed them Mr. A. B.'s opinion—his very distinct opinion. I certainly imagined they would be rather inclined to yield after that." On which, perhaps with a little smile, the attorney tells him: "Why, the fact is, that the other side have consulted counsel also. They have been to C. D., a very eminent man in Lincoln's Inn, a gentleman I have often consulted myself, and he advises them that they are quite right. They have sent me his opinion. Here it is; perhaps you would like to take it home with you." And so the client finds that there is "oracle against oracle"; that the god of "Old Square" speaks quite differently from the god of "New Square"; and goes home dissatisfied and bewildered. The courts of law are blocked with suits which counsel advised to be begun, which counsel advised to be defended, and in which neither plaintiff nor defendant likes to yield now, because both have spent so very much money.

I do not mean that all the uncertainty would be remedied by a better constitution of the legal profession. No doubt some uncertain cases there always must be; new varieties of complication arise daily, and require novel decisions. Unquestionably, too, other parts of our bad legal education make the law more uncertain than otherwise it would be. But it is plain that the artificial splitting of the law trade into two halves much aggravates the practical difficulty of getting at the law. "Opinions" are the opprobrium of the legal profession. Everybody knows that an "opinion" is to be had on almost every side of every question. "Show me your case," it is often said, "and I will write you your opinion." Now, this could hardly be if the solicitor, the man whom the client pays, had the responsibility of advising him. His interest would be to come as near to the truth as he could, because he would be responsible for the advice he

gave. But now he gets a shelter under the distant "barrister"; he does not feel ashamed when the case is decided against him, because Mr. X. Y., a name in the papers, and a man you cannot get hold of, said you would win. And the barrister has no responsibility to the client either. The client cannot come and say, "You advised me to sue; you told me I was going to win; yet you see I have lost". The man you can scold did not advise you, and the man who did advise you, you cannot scold.

There are other and very delicate points in this subject. I believe most English barristers, and most English solicitors, to be very honourable men; but we all know that there are *some* black sheep in both halves of the trade. When, years since, I was reading law, I had laid for me a peculiar rule for pleasing the less honest sort of attorneys: "Always," said a very experienced man, "always recommend *proceedings*, and then you will be sure to succeed". His notion was that a barrister who promoted "costs" would thrive with attorneys who live by costs. I quite believe that it would be a libel to ascribe such motives to most solicitors or most counsel; still one cannot help seeing how well the present system helps those who act on such motives. The ultimate adviser, the barrister, has no relation to the ultimate payer, the client; he has no motive to care to please him. He wants to please the attorney, for it is by the attorney's favour that he lives. What pleases *some* attorneys is present income. The barrister, therefore, who upon fair reasons, and within decent limits, always promotes costs and contention, will always please at least *those* attorneys. In case of gross failure, the natural penalty is the client's wrath; but we protect the attorney against this by enabling him to blame "counsel," and we protect "counsel" by immuring him in distant dignity.

It may be said that it would be quite useless for clients

commonly to see counsel, for the points which counsel have to decide on are so technical that the client cannot understand them. But ought they to be so technical? Ought not the main gist of all cases to be intelligible to men of business interested in them, and anxious to attend to them? In matter of fact, I believe that almost all the law of moneyed property is now intelligible to careful men of that sort; and if the law of landed property is not intelligible, it is only because that law is bad. Mysteries in practical affairs are very dangerous; the more so because, when they once exist, many quiet, unimaginative people cannot help saying and believing that they are inevitable and necessary. But any one who rouses his mind to ask in a specific case, How does this law come to be so unintelligible? will find that the reasons for it belong to some bygone time, and that now it wants to be altered and fitted to modern life. Nothing will ever simplify law so much as the making lawyers explain it to non-lawyers. It will be a great gain when all clients ask about their case anxiously, and when "counsel" have to explain it clearly.

But the bifurcation of our legal profession is not the only way in which our peculiar system of law-training makes the law uncertain. The education of our barrister, such as it was before explained, has as distinctly that effect as if it were designed on purpose. That education we saw to be an education of unselected detail. "Papers" which accidentally came into chambers were placed before the learner, and from them he educated himself. Casual instances were given him to learn from as they came, and from them he learnt what he did learn. By such a training we form excellent practitioners of detail, wonderful "case" lawyers. Years ago, an accomplished specimen of the results of such training used to answer every argument that in any sense purported to be general, or to be derived from principle, with

an impatient question. "But have you got a case, Mr. ——? have you got a case?" To him, and to all equally characteristic specimens of our legal education, each transaction was isolated. He wanted to see in the books, not the decision of an analogous case, but the decision of an identical one. "It is of no use having an opinion," he would add, "unless you can quote an authority for it," and by an authority he meant some recorded suit in which the specific question had been submitted to a judge and decided by him. To this species of lawyer nothing is certain which is not "within the four corners," as it used to be said, "of a case," and a recent case.

Accordingly, when a new case is laid before such persons, one which in a material degree possesses new conditions, or which varies in a patent particular from the standard authorities, it is a matter of accident which way they decide. The most prosperous and most cautious say, unless they are belied, that "the matter is doubtful," and then incline, more or less confidently, towards the side for which they are asked to advise. But in all cases the point, if new, is to the mass of lawyers very doubtful. An argument of "theory," as they speak, has no weight with them.

And when we examine the matter, we find that it ought to have no weight with them. A most rigid and careful arguer from principle, a really great lawyer, afterwards on the Bench, used to say, with the emphasis of a past generation, "That's the law—I know that is the law; but the d—d judges won't decide it so". And so, in fact, our system works. A great part of our law is really judge-made law. The courts always profess to be deciding on some ground of past precedent. But very often, and of necessity in novel circumstances, this is nothing but profession. The judges are really making the law when they are said to be declaring it; and if they declared it on solid

grounds of principle, and for reasons which could with any sort of confidence be assigned and predicted beforehand, this judicial legislation would be tolerable. In fact, a great part of the best law in the world was so made by great judges who considered principle and followed out principle. But a mere successful practitioner, who began to learn by "papers" and "cases," who has thriven on practice, who has for years sneered at principle, is the last man, when he becomes a judge, to make a judge of "principle". His whole life has been spent in an opposite treatment of things; his whole mind has been invested in that treatment. You do not expect a plain cook to turn philosophical chemist; and it is as little rational to expect a barrister of cases and instances to be changed on a sudden to a judge of great principles and broad doctrines. And unless he does so change, his decision is uncertain. If the case is really new, if an identical precedent is not on the file, the judge trained on mere practice, the judge with no head for principle, is confused. There is nothing to guide him in the past decisions, and he has all his life tried to be guided, and boasted that he is guided only, by past decisions. Accordingly, in so many cases it is but a "solemn toss-up" how the judges decide. They are really making new law, but they are not making it on principle; they fear principle. They are guided by fancied analogies and past precedents—one judge relying on one analogy and another on another, but none having anything substantial.

The training for judicial legislation should surely be of two sorts; first, a knowledge of how, in other systems of law, the same or analogous cases have been dealt with. Yet here most of our practising lawyers are deficient. As the writer I have before quoted observes: "From the contemporaneous existence in England of two systems of law, the civil and the common law, applied to different branches,

there are no doubt English lawyers, though comparatively few in number, who know something of the Roman law; but who knows anything of the laws of the modern Continental States? And when is even the Roman law systematically made a necessary part of the education of an English common lawyer? We often hear American decisions quoted; but do we, as a body, possess any thorough knowledge of American practice, or of the points on which it agrees with or differs from our own? Is not, in fact, our whole knowledge of Roman, Continental, or American laws a thing occasionally got up for a special purpose, and laid aside when that purpose has been answered?" No doubt we have some real jurists; the age which produced Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* could not be wholly deficient in such; but the mass of the law trade look to the cases in the books, and that is why we suffer from "the grotesque decisions" of our judges, as Sir Robert Phillimore happily called them, "in special pleading, the construction of wills, and the law of real property". Or again, the training for judicial legislation should be one of jurisprudence in the highest sense—of the jurisprudence which Burke must have been thinking of when he called it the "pride of the human intellect". It must be a knowledge of the reasons which make laws good or bad, eligible or ineligible, in given cases. But no one will contend that such knowledge is now taught in "chambers," nor is it possible that it should ever be taught there.

Lord Westbury has spoken of the "rubbish called reports" of judicial decisions; Mr. Galton speaks as if it were certain that our judges had degenerated. But surely our modern judges are put to "make bricks without straw". They are set to make laws of principle, and they are not taught principle. I confess I doubt if the old judges were any better. They were not "found out," as the moderns

are. The old judges could take their precedents from "Sederfin and Keble"; could decide a present case by a fancied likeness to an irrelevant old case. But no one watched them; only forgotten term reports contain the annals of them. But the strained analogies and the antagonistic judgments of modern judges fall upon an educated world. They do not harmonise with the floating rationality which is in the air of the age. The litigant even is ashamed of them. He thinks even if he does not say—"What is this jargon? what are these metaphysics? Why are four judges for me, and five against me? Why should *my money* be voted away like this? Surely I ought to be able to understand why it goes from me, if it is to go."

The state of the English law at present aggravates the bad consequences to us of these defects in our lawyers. If ever there was a country in which good legal mechanics were wanted, England just now is that country. Our law is unquestionably better in substance than it was fifty years ago, but it is also worse in form. In the time of Lord Eldon it had some kind of unity and consistency about it; it was, in a certain sense, all of a piece. But now, the reforms which have swept away most of the worst abuses have made it of a piece no longer. Side by side with the dull colouring of the old law there are bright patches of new statutes. An Act of Parliament has destroyed this and that singular growth of history, and has erected instead this and that useful contrivance. But exactly how much was destroyed and how much was left depended on the caprice of Parliament. Very likely the reforming Act was changed in "Committee" in the Commons; some important clause was maimed, or some dubious words inserted; or perhaps some old but still vigorous law lord fell upon the measure, and twisted it to suit ancient opinion. The tide of law reform has been like the tide of the sea; it has advanced

most powerfully, but it has also stopped most curiously. The line between the old English law and the new is as accidental a line as any sea-beach; it was caused by the momentary magnitude of shifting forces, and bears hardly a trace of settled design.

But as an involved country taxes the map-maker, so an involved law taxes the jurist; the more complex the law the more difficult to see it or to mend it. But we in England want both things of our lawyers. We want to have a difficult law made as certain as it can be made; we want to know, as well as we can, which of our lawsuits are good and which bad before we spend money on them. We want also to have the ancient complex and patched aggregate of law shortened and simplified into a consistent and compact code. For this purpose we want a school of lawyers trained with singular care, and in the most fit way; whereas our barristers are trained with no care from the legislature, and in a most unfit way.

But, it will be said, how are these evils to be remedied? I do not think I am exactly bound to suggest cures—I only undertook to show the existence of an evil; and only persons infinitely more learned than myself can frame a scheme in detail. I can only sketch briefly a coarse outline.

The first and most plain thing to do is to establish an examination for the Bar. On the surface of the matter our policy is now ridiculous. We give barristers, as such, a monopoly of many important offices on the ground that they are supposed to know law, but we take no care that they do know law. In fact, many barristers have never learnt law; and many could not learn. Many have not the industry, and many have not the mind. And some of these unlearned persons are certainly appointed to posts requiring learning. Mr. Lowe tells us that he has seen a judge in the colonies appear ignorant of the common "forms of action," and of

the shape of the "declaration"—things which a man who had studied common law could not help knowing if he knew anything. The absurdity of confining offices to a class because it is supposed to be competent, and yet taking no care that this class is in truth competent, an examination would remove immediately.

But a good examination would do far more also. A real examination would compel men to study law as a whole, and to study it in its connections. There is no other way of preparing for an examination; a person in that sort of reading has carefully to consider not only what he knows, but what he does *not* know. He must make some sort of classification of the subject—some rough kind of map of it in his head. He cannot otherwise tell at all whether he is fit to stand the test or unfit. A successful student is for ever improving this mental map; day after day, and month after month, he comes to see new spaces to be known, and he fills the old spaces with new knowledge. A mere student in chambers may work hard at the "papers," but he may, after all, know and feel that he only knows a series of isolated points. He scarcely knows how much there is between the points, or what else there is in the subject round about them.

A high-class examination, too, necessarily deals with matters of principle. Indeed, an examiner can hardly avoid them if he would. In chambers a student learns to consider, as the active practitioner—his master—considers, what is the minimum of law necessary to determine in a particular state of facts—the minimum then and there necessary to give sound advice. And this is a very good kind of knowledge. A safe practitioner is made by it, and cannot be made without it. But it will not of itself train a great lawyer; and reading for an examination exactly supplies its defects. An examiner, wanting to test pupils, gets hold of the "problems" of his subject—those points which are not yet worked out in

any book, but which, by fair application of admitted principle, can be worked out. The abler students, in consequence, are constantly thinking of such "problems". They search the examination papers for years past; they search every likely book for hints of what they may be. And, when found, they prepare in their minds an apparatus for solving them. So, in law, a good examiner would ask many questions on the margin of his subject. He would state points analogous to those in the books, but not identical with those in the books. And to prepare for such an examination a student must consider legal doctrines, not in their narrowest aspect, but in their most general aspect. He must get rid of the notion that "principle does not pay". It is exactly principle and *only* principle that will pay in such an examination. And exactly on that account you cannot cram for it. The "book-work"—the instances already decided—you might perhaps get up by sheer industry; but the application of admitted doctrine to out-of-the-way facts, or undecided things, you cannot cram, since by its nature you cannot anywhere find it on paper.

If the examination were like the Oxford class list, it would be easy to arrange that for the higher classes Roman law and foreign law might be made to tell. For the pass examination, of course, a sound knowledge of only the elements of English law would be enough. You do not want all sessions barristers to be accomplished jurists; all you can do is to give a premium to the more valuable kinds of knowledge; and if you put men in the first class who know certain things, you give them a very valuable premium. *Cæteris paribus*, the man in the first class will be employed before the man in the second class. The mark, even in the beginning, will tell for something; and in the end will tell for much, since the examination will itself improve; and the average of class No. 1 will, in fact, be very much better

—be both more able and more industrious than the average of class No. 2.

Lectures are the second obvious mode of improving our legal training: some reformers prize them very highly, and would even make them compulsory; and only experience can settle points like these. But I own I do not like absolutely prescribing to any man *how* he is to learn this subject. The only ground for State intervention is that it is necessary for certain purposes that a man should know certain things. But if he *does* know them, why should the State care how he learnt them? What is the State the better for that knowledge? Some persons are, indeed, dubious of examination; they fear that the examiner may be deceived, that false or imperfect knowledge may be palmed upon him; and they fancy that by requiring an attendance at lectures they gain an additional security. But I think our experience, which in Civil Service and other examinations now goes over many years, ought to give us great confidence in examiners. They are certainly very skilled "intellectual detectives," much better than we should have thought possible years ago; undoubtedly the men they pass, are, as a rule, altogether better than the men they reject, and really know with decent fairness all which the examiner certifies they know; and even if it were not so, I do not see that lectures would improve the matter or keep out cram students. The "cram" student is a sedulous man, and would attend lectures very carefully.

But though I would not enjoin lectures, though I would only require the possession of knowledge, and let each man get it where he can, no one values lectures for certain purposes more than I do; no one can believe that anything will be more useful. I have had occasion to say in this Review[1] before: "There is no falser notion than Carlyle's,

[1] *The Fortnightly Review.*

that the true University of the present day is a 'great collection of books'. No University can be perfect which does not set a young man face to face with great teachers. Mathematics in part may teach themselves, may be learned at least by a person of great aptitude and at great cost of toil from written treatises; but true literature is still largely a tradition; it does not go straight on like mathematics and if a learner is to find it for himself in a big library, he will be grey-headed before his work is nearly over. And besides, 'character forms itself in the stream of the world' —by the impact of mind on mind. There are few impacts so effectual as that of ardent student upon ardent student, or as that of mature teacher upon immature student." I suppose this is as applicable to law as it is to anything. And for the special evil of the English Bar, lectures would perhaps be peculiarly useful. More or less, a lecturer must deal with connected principle, for a mere disquisition on law without principles would be so dull that no one would listen to it.

But the greatest reform of all, I think, would be the abolition of the present arbitrary division between the two halves of the legal profession. This would bring the distributer of law more under the control of the consumer, and so make him better. At present "counsel" is at so remote a distance, and on so sequestered an eminence, that the client cannot get at him. He is subject to no cross-questions, and is not obliged to explain law plainly to a plain man. A mystic charm is spread about him, as if his words were somehow higher than other words, and as if he were not paid like other people.

A great many persons I know will say this is impossible. We are so accustomed to the strict link between solicitor and barrister, that we forget how arbitrary it is. We forget that it is insular, and that on the Continent and in America

it does not exist. Indeed, why should it exist? On what ground can we be justified? The State can require of certain persons, who want to live by certain skilled trades, that they shall show that they are fit for those trades. But if a man can show that he is fit for any trade, on what principle can you forbid him, only because he is fit for another trade? Why should you split a trade into compulsory bits? Why should there not be a "general practitioner" in law as there is in physic? Why should not the same lawyer practise all law if he is fit for it, and can get clients in it?

The abolition of the compulsory demarcation would probably benefit the client, just as all approaches to free-trade benefit the consumer. It would give him the choice of more mixed and various ability. The division of labour would be allowed more liberty to adapt itself to special wants and individual characters. This is the way it works in America:—

1059. That is after the materials of the case, the facts, have been previously investigated and laid before him in the Brief, is it not?—No; it is in the outset. That is a privilege which the Client claims, of seeing the Counsel, and conferring with him, whether he is to go to Law, or not.

1060. How is the evidence hunted up?—That is done by the Attorney and Client, but Counsel sees personally the leading witnesses.

1061. Who is the Attorney, as distinct from the Counsel?—The offices are divided according to the nature of the business. A man begins to practise Law in New York, for instance, and he has one or two cases. He then does all the business himself; but his business increases, and he has more than he can do himself, and he then employs a clerk, who takes a part of it off his hands; then he employs an Attorney, and the cases that require no investigation, such as bringing a Common Action, would be commenced by the Attorney, without seeing the Counsellor, unless there was a special request made in the matter.

1062. So that the Attorney is nominated and employed by the Counsel?—Yes; he generally belongs to his office.

1063. And generally speaking, there is a partnership, is there not? —Yes. The moment the business becomes sufficiently important to justify the taking in a partner, the Counsel takes in this man whom he has employed as Attorney, or some one else, as his partner, and he does the ordinary business of the office, while the other goes into Court.

1064. Are there men of considerable eminence, such as the late Mr. Webster, who never act in any other way than as Counsel?—Yes.

1065. Practically, in all important cases, there is the same division of labour between the Counsel and the Attorney in the United States as exists in this country?—Exactly so; but it is rendered so by circumstances. If you go into States which are new, where the population is spare, there are few Lawsuits, and the Counsel will sit in his office half the day, and talk with a Client, for he has nothing else to do; of course, in that case, he needs no Attorney.

1066. Is not the effect of this system, that in all simple Causes, only one agent is employed?—Yes.

1067. Therefore it is much cheaper in practice than the system pursued in this country, of having two agents in every case?—Yes; this is certainly true.

The gradual separation brought about by nature has none of the bad effects of our arbitrary separation enforced by law. If you employed a firm, one partner in which was a barrister and one an attorney, you could scold both partners if you lost; you could talk of it in their district, and so they would not like you to lose. But in England now you are in "counsel's" hands, and you cannot hurt him though he ruin you.

We should have better barristers too. Now a man cannot go to the Bar except he has some peculiar "connection," or unless he has money enough to keep him in idleness for years. But if he could practise on small attorneys' work, he might live till he made his talents known. And we should have infinitely better attorneys, for they would have a career and a future before them which now they have not. It is very hard that the want of a few hundred

pounds should *by law* degrade a man for life, and very bad for the public that the highest energies of the sort of lawyers the public see most of should be for ever depressed by a despotic and unnecessary obstacle. But I do not care much about the legal profession; at least I cannot so much care; my principal anxiety is for the clients and the public. And because these artificial hedges cramp and hurt them, I hope soon to see them swept away.

THE CRÉDIT MOBILIER AND BANKING COMPANIES IN FRANCE.[1]

(1857.)

The crop of currency-pamphlets is beginning. We again read the old titles, "How shall we get through the Winter?" by a Merchant; "Too many Bank-notes," by Bullion; "*Ohe jam satis*," by Anti-Peel; "Faith in Paper," by a Warwickshire Magistrate; "Infallible Interchange," by Genius; "Sufficient Accommodation," by a Manchester Man—familiar to us ten years ago, likely perhaps to be familiar to us ten years hence. These pamphlets are as sure signs of scarce money as many thistles of a poor soil. When the currency is plentiful, people know what it is; when it is rare, they try to make out what it is, in order that they may obtain it. We have, however, no such aim; perhaps, indeed, the recent signs of diminishing scarcity may preclude such literature from multiplying. At any rate, though connected with money, our object is much more humble. We have no certain specific for pecuniary evils: no means of returning to any one the money he has spent. We do not even profess to be able to explain all the phenomena

[1] *Report presented by the Board of Administration of the General Association of Crédit Mobilier, at the ordinary General Meeting of Shareholders on the 23rd of April*, 1856. Translated from the French, and published as an advertisement in the *Times* of 21st May, 1856.

"Les Institutions de Crédit en France." *Par* M. Eugène Forcade. *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15 *Mars*, 1 *Avril*, 15 *Mai*, 1 *Juin*, 1856.

of the recent state of the money-market. We only mean to set forth a few facts as to a neighbouring country, whose pecuniary failures have, it is certain, a close connection with our own.

Even this, in ordinary cases, would be no very easy task. The political institutions of a country are a difficult subject for a foreigner: its daily commercial habits are still more so. We are fortunate, however, in having this time a very accomplished guide.

M. Eugène Forcade, in a series of essays (published in the *Revue des deux Mondes*) which we have placed at the head of our article, has thrown so much light on the recent history of the banking companies of France, that there is less risk in writing about them than might be fancied.

A person trained in the current political economy would *a priori* think that governments, despotic or free, had little to do with the trade of banking. The maxims of free-trade forbid them to engage in that trade as much or more than in any other; they cannot learn it; they have no means of watching transactions, estimating traders, scrutinising bills. Since they cannot know the business themselves, it is desirable they should interfere as little as possible with those who may know it. As usual, their true office is limited to enforcing the moralities of commerce, to ensuring the performance of engagements, to punishing frauds or gross negligence in the keeping of other people's property. So it would seem at first sight. There is something, however, a little interesting in large hoards of *money*. In a rude age a government is apt to appropriate them; even in a civilised age it is sometimes suspected of doing so; fifty years ago, there was a run on the Bank of France, from a report that the first Napoleon had taken all its reserve to Germany. But in general civilisation is decorous; it is skilled in "indirections": it has a hundred ways of ac-

complishing its wishes; it is only after long study that you perceive through their seeming innocence any resemblance to the coarse actions of barbarous societies. On attentive observation, however, it will be found that few governments like to leave quite alone the money of their subjects. They rarely, indeed, keep it themselves; but they very commonly grant a monopoly in keeping it, or a monopoly of the most profitable way of using it when kept, or a monopoly of the right of associating in order to keep it, to some persons who promise "financial help". Mr. Macaulay has explained to us how political in its origin was the Bank of England. A control over its subjects' money in some form almost all governments have been anxious to obtain.

As society goes on, a new temptation on this side seems to beset a government. In early society, regular industry is mostly carried on with people's own money; there is no great facility in borrowing much; no one has much to spare: those who have, are anxious or usurious in lending it. As civilisation progresses, this alters. Large sums of money, by the agency of credit, accumulate in few hands. The holders of these have necessarily great power over the national industry. By the amount they choose to lend, they settle, for the moment, whether that industry shall be much or little; by the selection of the persons to whom they lend, they can stimulate one trade or another—one department of industry or another. Few governments have liked to leave this great power uncontrolled; they have striven by laws to keep it in check, by monopolies to keep it in hands which they can trust, likely to use it as they wish. Some power over it they have commonly thus succeeded in retaining.

If there be any truth in these remarks in general, it is perhaps in France, at the present moment, that we should expect the realisation of them. We repeat, till we are tired of repeating, that the government does everything in

France; that police regulation there extends through human life; that even small undertakings are not protected by their minuteness from *surveillance;* that, in important undertakings, the State has the habit both of taking the initiative and keeping the check,—at once of giving the impulse and of watching that it does not go too far. This is not a feature of the present despotic government only. M. de Tocqueville has shown that a network of administration similar to the present existed before the first revolution. It existed equally under the Legitimist monarchy, the Constitutional monarchy, and the Republic; and its activity was pretty much the same under them all. No one can expect that a power so important, so convenient, so tempting as that of *money* would be left without government supervision; on the contrary, we should expect the State to take a first place, to assume what is called the "leadership of industry" as a matter of course and at once.

The character and antecedents of the present ruler of France[1] do not diminish this expectation; on the contrary, they would increase it. He has been called a free-trader; it would be truer to call him a *free-spender.* No one can go to Paris, or, we believe, to any of the largest towns in France, without seeing great signs of the vast industrial works he has undertaken; of new streets and new public edifices; of an immense expenditure in employing labour. Although he appears, perhaps, to understand the maxims of Adam Smith, as far as they have reference to foreign tariffs, better than any former French Government, he has not shown any leaning towards them in matters of internal traffic. On the contrary, a natural taste for large expenditure seems to indispose him to admit the idea that the daily petty savings of a country are the narrow

[1] Napoleon III.

limit of its public efforts. Socialistic notions, too, from a very early period have had an influence—how great an influence he is too reserved to give us data for saying—upon his mind. He would evidently escape from the *régime* of competition if he could. His very position, according to the view which he so often inculcates of it, as the omnipotent chief of a democracy of which he is the representative, of a people which has exhausted its mission in appointing him, would incline him to take a view rather similar of matters commercial,—to approve rather of a single association which should embody than of competitive units which should constitute and compose the national industry. In a hundred ways the close narrowness of an anxious despotism shrinks from the free energetic play of internal commercial freedom. Still more important, in this point of view, is the composition of his court. Obvious circumstances separated him from the literary and oratorical statesmen of the monarchy: he wished to be served by those who were essentially and peculiarly men of business; they would have been out of place in a dumb administrative government. The Legitimist families, even if they had been trained in habits of action, have not commonly given their adhesion to a dynasty claiming under the people. The Emperor was almost compelled to choose his most conspicuous associates from the ambitious wealth of the country,—from commercial men, who wish to make money in order to be able to spend money,—whose aim it is to obtain a high social, still better, a court life, from the sums and labours of trade. A spirit of speculation has ever characterised such men. A haste to be rich is part of their essence; and such as are thus in haste, even if innocent, will never be cautious. In France, too, the spirit of Bourse speculation had deeply penetrated the political classes: the name of De Morny explains what we mean.

No kind of persons could be imagined to whom the control and management of large sums of money would be more agreeable, or in whose hands it would be more dangerous.

These circumstances account for the inclination of the French Government to obtain the control of its subjects' money. A part of their law supplies the means. By the Code, the right to form a public company with limited liability (oddly called *société anonyme*, in contrast to private partnerships with individual names) can only be obtained from a government board which is absolute in practice as well as in theory—which can refuse applications without reason shown, and grant applications without giving an explanation. It is clearly therefore within the competence of a government to give certain of its friends, some of those with whom it has influence, some persons from whom it thinks it can obtain advantages, a real and strictly legal monopoly of a privilege of which able traders will make skilful use, and thereby probably a practical monopoly of certain branches of trade. The circumstances are different from what an English trader would suppose. The French law of commercial association does not allow of companies with transferable shares, but with unlimited liability, of which we have so many. Limited liability is—oddly enough to our notions—made essential to a company, to the division of the capital into shares, and to their transferability at the pleasure of the holder; and in practice, accordingly, is an essential condition of great partnerships. It is true, the *société anonyme* is not the only form in which this limitation of liability can be obtained; partnerships *en commandite* have likewise the privilege of transferable shares; but the division of the partners into two classes—one of which is unlimitedly and the other only limitedly responsible—however suitable in small undertakings where all the partners know one another, is practically difficult to manage on a

large scale, where the interests of the two classes may seem to be in conflict, and where the unworking partners may not, when it comes to the point, quite like to give up the absolute control over the entire management, though its exclusive possession is one of the conditions upon which the working partners have agreed to be solely subject to an unlimited responsibility. There is little chance of a large *société en commandite* arising to compete with a *société anonyme* specially favoured by the State. Even if nothing else, the insensible influence of a foreign government forbids. Practically the French Emperor has the privilege of conferring on his friends a monopoly of large and limited commercial association.

The *Association Générale de Crédit Mobilier* would be the very embodiment of these remarks, if we could believe either the boasts of its friends, or the hints of its enemies. It is a *société anonyme*. It has a special charter from the Government, which is little likely to give it a rival in its chosen sphere. Its conductors have relations, no one knows how intimate, with the courtier wealth and stock-speculating statesmen that surround the Emperor. Its object has been described as embodying the genius of commercial enterprise, "the spirit of the initiative". It boasts itself that it affords the greatest aid to the Government in national loans, and considers it a part of the "spirit in which a great establishment should be conducted"—a trait of its "liberal devotedness"—to subscribe to loans without a profit. The patronage of the best national enterprises, it alleges, is its work. Railways, canals, maritime, all the great enterprises which are to immortalise the "Emperor of Industry," it is eager to aid. Nor is it content with a commonplace way of doing so. In the spirit of industrial socialism, it regrets the isolation of these undertakings It wishes to replace them by a single company, which

should be the proprietor of all of them; at least of as many as it is able, and of all of them if it could. This design is no imputation of its enemies. The substitution of the stock of a single company for the shares and bonds of different undertakings is a point particularly dwelt on by its official expositor, M. Isaac Péreire.[1] It is with this view that it receives, we are informed, deposits of the money of individuals. "Credit" is the instrument with which it is to work. As the public appreciate its singular devotedness, it will gain strength. Differing from the maxim of Adam Smith, "that a trader who professes to be doing good to the public rarely does good to himself," the *société générale* will combine national usefulness with private solidity. At present, its greatest aims are in abeyance. Time is necessary to gain a position. It can only now, in a slight degree, and for a short time, aid in commercial undertakings. The limitation of its means, the number of claims on it, compel its conductors, not only to buy shares, but to sell them. The time is not yet come for a single beneficent association of industry.

On the other side we hear very different opinions. All over Europe there has been an impression that the association has been established for sinister purposes; that its disinterestedness is a pretence; that it promotes, and is meant to promote, the worst stock-exchange speculation; that even if it aided in action, the vastness of the schemes it patronises, and their number, might strain the national capital. But, in general, it is alleged that it is not intended for actual enterprise; that it does not really care for making railways or aiding canals; that its scene is the share-market. Some

[1] The preamble of the statute states that the society has the object "*de favoriser le développement de l'industrie des travaux publics, et d'opérer par voie de consolidation en un fonds commun la conversion des titres particuliers d'entreprises diverses*".

of these thoughts have found a very adequate expression in France itself. Restricted as the expression of opinion is in Paris, it is proportionably ingenious in finding safe vents. By tradition an advocate has a license. Keenly watchful as a government may be over the conscientious utterance of individual conviction, it has generally given a right of speech to those who do not pretend to be convinced. Those may be allowed to say what they mean who are known not to mean what they say. In Paris, the permission has been taken advantage of. A certain M. Goupo was found to bring an action against the Crédit Mobilier for issuing fictitious statements to raise the value of their shares. M. Goupo's commercial character was bad, and he could not establish his action; but it afforded M. Berryer an opportunity of giving a sufficiently keen criticism of the Government company. "I do not know," said the great orator, "if, since 1828, M. Goupo has frequented the Bourse; but suppose he has, who is it that reproaches him with it? The Société de Crédit Mobilier, that is to say, the greatest gambling-house which the world has ever seen. We must not be misled by words; there are magnificent ones, I know —the protection of industry, the enfranchisement of the national credit, the development of private credit, the consolidation of all commercial stocks: a dream. All that is the surface; they have given to gambling a new name; they call it in their reports the Industry of Credit. The Industry of Credit; what is that? Their twenty-eight millions of profit; how have they been produced? They are not due to the prosperity of the enterprises in which the Crédit Mobilier has taken a share, and to whose aid it has brought its great influence. No; they are due to realisations which represent the difference between the price at which they sell and the price at which they buy. It is gambling which has produced them."

Nor did the honesty of the administrators escape. "You are then, you say, an institution of public utility; you have limited liability, and you play; you are irresponsible, and you gamble; you are a bank of play which sees the cards," etc., etc. Such speeches are not now common in Paris.

If we turn from the eloquence of its enemies and the boasts of its friends to the actual facts of the *Crédit Mobilier*, the first surprise of an Englishman will be at the smallness of its means. Accustomed himself to very large companies, which yet neither wish, nor aim, nor are thought to have a tithe of the influence for good or for evil ascribed to the Association Générale, he naturally expects that the latter is a greater combination than any with which he is familiar. He will be disappointed. The capital of the Crédit Mobilier is not so great as that of the Bristol and Exeter Railway, not one-fifth of the capital of the Great Western, about one-tenth of that of the London and North Western. The table of its liabilities shows how narrow are its means. We may turn it into English money, as the smallness of the French coin of account gives a magnificence to what is numbered in it:—

Capital	£2,400,000
Deposits, current accounts	4,127,172
Bills payable and sundries	34,576
Reserve fund	67,844
Total amount of profit realised during the year 1855, after carrying a sufficient sum to the reserve fund	1,073,116
	£7,702,708

To an English trader, or an English economist, it appears idle to attempt to revolutionise industry with only seven millions or so of money. The London and Westminster Bank,

a most useful institution, but strictly within the limits of pure prose, on which no one writes any eloquence, has as much. There is nothing in any other part of its financial statement which makes such an event more likely. The Crédit Mobilier is an ordinary chartered company, with limited liability; with £20 shares. The amount of the deposits it can receive is limited to twice its capital. It is a bank with special design and limited means. It is true, that according to its original charter it was to be allowed to issue debentures to the amount of ten times its capital; and in the theory of the institution these were to be the great instruments of its operation; they were to be issued in exchange for the shares, or bonds, of different companies by way of purchase money: if a man had ten shares in the Strasburg Railway, he was to sell them to the Crédit Mobilier, and receive a debenture of the latter by way of payment. Gradually, and in an indefinite perspective, this was to be extended, till the Crédit Mobilier had bought up the whole of the Strasburg Railway, and all similar works. Of course, however, a perpetual repetition of this operation would require an indefinite issue of bonds; and on the first attempt to issue them, there was, perhaps, a hesitation on the part of the public, much outcry on the part of the opponents of the company; and finally, a paragraph in the *Moniteur* quashed the operation. There is as yet no reason either to hope or to fear that the Société Générale will succeed in buying up and incorporating with itself the shares of different undertakings.

The business of the company hitherto has been of a very simple, though profitable nature. As is shown by the above account, they have received four millions, and rather more, of depositors' money. This has been obtained by a slight variation from their original charter, by which it was only intended that they should act as bankers for public

companies; they now receive the deposits of individuals also. The employment of their money has been mainly in share-speculating. Their account of assets, showing what they have done with their money, proves this; it is as follows:—

Rentes	£1,602,770	
Debentures	1,313,784	
Railway and other shares . . .	2,377,264	
	£5,293,818	
Deducted for calls not made up to the 31st December, 1855 .	1,246,668	
		£4,047,150
Investments for fixed periods, in treasury bonds, continuations, advances on shares, debentures, etc.		3,373,016
Premises and furniture		43,288
Balance in hand, and dividends to be received on 31st December last		239,254
		£7,702,708

It is clear that the first item of £4,047,150 is entirely a purchase of public and private securities, stock, shares, or debentures. It is difficult to say how much of the second item of £3,373,016 is a loan on deposit of such securities, or likewise a purchase of them. All ambiguity, however, is removed by a reference to the profit-and-loss account; from which it appears that the profit obtained, or reckoned on a valuation of present stock to be obtainable, from the sales of property purchased, is £962,224.[1] The income

[1] The profit-and-loss account last published is as follows in English money, omitting shillings and pence:—

The total amount of rentes, shares, and debentures in hand, which on 31st December, 1854, was	£2,298,404
Has been augmented by purchases and subscriptions made during the year 1855	10,632,836
Total . . .	£12,931,240

derived from it, £120,816. The interest derivable from other sources, including "continuations," is only £110,571; from which it is quite clear that the loan operations of the society must be comparatively trifling, and that it is from the

The amount of realisations having been	£8,680,097	
To which must be added the amount of securities remaining on hand	5,293,818	
		13,973,915
There results a profit of		£1,042,675
The profits arising from commissions and interest on advances amount to		57,099
The continuations on shares and rentes have produced		53,472
The interest derived from various sources of investment has amounted to		120,816
The proceeds of the reserve fund to		768
Total gross profit		£1,274,830
For general charges, expenses of administration, and first establishment	£23,838	
For interest on accounts current	41,703	
For gratuities, relief, and charitable donations	5,559	
		71,100
		£1,203,731
From this amount of profit we further deduct the following items:		
Extraordinary sinking fund on the land account, in order to bring back the amount to the purchase price	£23,612	
Reductions on the cost-price of securities not quoted on 'Change	36,838	
Lastly, presumed loss upon the purchases of corn	20,000	
		80,450
Balance of profit on 31st December, 1855		£1,123,281

With respect to the last deduction, M. Forcade thinks, apparently rightly, that the company had no power under their charter to speculate in corn.

bargain and sale of shares and similar property that its profit of more than a million or some 40 per cent. upon its capital has been derived. This explains the influence which is ascribed to it, and the almost terror with which it is mentioned. Seven millions and a half of money, though a trifle in works of real enterprise, insufficient to make a first-class railway, or any work which the nineteenth century would think great,—though not to English notions very vast for loans to commercial men, and for the legitimate operations of banking,—though ludicrously insufficient for "consolidating the stock of different undertakings," is nevertheless a very large sum to be employed in share-speculating. A movable sum of that amount in the hands of clever scheming and active men (and such, it is universally agreed, are the administrators of the Crédit Mobilier) must be capable of producing great effects. We will not, with M. Berryer, call the Crédit Mobilier the greatest gambling-house which the world has ever seen; but we must regard it as a formidable speculator, a stock-exchange "operator" of the first magnitude.

Such is the Crédit Mobilier, according to the facts and its published accounts; and though it is very different from what the magniloquent pretensions of its expositors would persuade us to believe, the objections to it are very considerable. In the first place, it cannot but promote a spirit of gambling speculation. In a country where the direct sanction of the government is the strongest of moving powers, that government sanctions the establishment of a huge company, with the special object of speculating. It gives to this company practically the monopoly of the considerable advantages of limited responsibility. That company speculates on a large scale. It buys and sells, as the accounts show, to the extent of nine or ten millions per annum. It is impossible that this should produce no

effect on excitable people. The old speculators of the Bourse—many of them the rivals of the fortunate men who have obtained the favour of the government—are not likely to submit quietly. They speculate in rivalship and in opposition to the company; the effect is a still further disturbance of the Bourse market—more rises and falls—a new opportunity for further speculation. The French are the last people who can be trusted with such a temptation. Cautious—timidly cautious as they have ever been in legitimate commerce, remarkable for a tendency to a petty and pedlar traffic, as Mr. Burke said long ago they were—gambling proper, or mere traffic in chance risings and falls of price, has ever had a great attraction for them. A lottery is always a favourite topic. Some of the soundest companies try to combine something like it with the issue of their debentures, in order to make them more popular. Trafficking in the shares of companies with limited responsibility is exactly adapted for a people who are really timid, but are fond of the excitement of risk; it defines the amount of danger; it shows them all they hazard; it allows them the pleasure of venturing it, as well, we fancy, as most commonly the pain of losing it. At present, it is said, the mania has penetrated into a very humble class. A coal-heaver was seen, only a few days since, to come from the Bourse, in the attire of his trade, trying to read his share. To see a sort of government-company speculating; to see opposition rivals speculating; to see a great game going on, and have such sanction for playing it,—is too much for Frenchmen. They have played it.

The share speculations of the Crédit Mobilier are liable to a further objection. Whatever people may do with their own money, they have no right to speculate with the money of other people. The Crédit Mobilier receives deposits on "account current"; doubtless the greater part repayable

at short periods, if not on demand. They ought only to employ these in temporary investments—loans, discounts, short transactions, in a word—of which the end can be seen, and from which they can soon have their money returned if they want it. The special design is exactly the contrary. The Crédit Mobilier is avowedly intended to aid undertakings of which the duration is long and the returns slow—"*opérations à long terme*". It seems the most obvious common-sense that a company should be sure of having for a long time the moneys it proposes to invest in lengthy operations. If the Crédit Mobilier were to get into discredit, if it were to have to realise the four millions of securities it now holds, it could not be sure of realising them at a profit; as the time would probably be one of diffused discredit, it would, in all reasonable likelihood, realise them at a loss. No apparent or even realised profits for one or two years can make this a generally safe and wise scheme of operations. M. Forcade has remarked that the founders of the Crédit Mobilier recognised a very similar obligation. When speaking of the bonds which they were proposing to issue, they distinguished between those of short date, which were to correspond to mere temporary investments which run off and bring in funds to meet the bonds as soon as they become due, and bonds of long date, which were to correspond to investments comparatively permanent. It is obvious that deposits on "current account" correspond exactly with bonds at short date in this respect. Perhaps we should say, the same reasons apply to them with augmented force, for they constitute the most vital and essential part of the whole association; if ever it get into discredit as a bank of deposit, it cannot go on for a day. In his report for 1854, M. Péreire, the real head of the company, actually boasted that the fixed investments of the company had been restricted to their own capital;

we should like to know how he makes out that an equal caution has been observed in 1855. The Minister of Finance, who is said, probably with truth, to be officially (the *Moniteur*, we believe, says daily) informed of all the Crédit Mobilier does, should look into the matter at once. No government can afford to be blind to the responsibility of founding such a company, or accepting such a supervision.

The danger of such a company as the Crédit Mobilier does not stop at the threshold of the Bourse, nor with its own operations. What it calls the encouragement of industry is in some circumstances a dangerous thing. Industry may be encouraged too much. The limit of the proper new investments of a country in every year is, the saving on hand from the year or years just preceding. All old savings, as a rule, are invested; the only new fund is the new accumulation. This is all which a nation can spend in a new way without trenching on old ways. The experience of 1847 has enlightened us in England about this. We then found that we were endeavouring to lay out in railways more money than we had at call. We were obliged to withdraw funds from our old trades and investments to meet our new engagements; and the time accidentally coinciding with that of a deficient harvest, and finding many old and mismanaged houses living on a credit which they had nothing to justify, the result was a panic. The case is that of a landowner who "improves" himself out of his income; who spends all his available money in draining, and then has no cash to meet his weekly bills. France is now learning this lesson. Mainly devoted to Bourse speculation, as the Crédit Mobilier may be, it nevertheless requires something to speculate with. New shares are the best means. It is a great convenience to enterprising founders of companies to have a wealthy

body like the Crédit Mobilier, almost always ready to take a considerable number of shares. The "spirit of the initiative" helps them over the first difficulty. It answers, or, at least, did answer, for a time the purpose of the Crédit Mobilier to take shares; for their support is well known, and the idea that they are "backing" the new enterprise raises the price. This is the old policy of Mr. Hudson, and in excited markets it is a very effective one. The forty per cent. profit which figures in the last account is, we fear, partially caused by reckoning on a value of shares augmented by the notion that the Crédit Mobilier is aiding the undertaking, which may be apt to be followed by a corresponding depreciation when the company begins to sell, and the rumour gets abroad that the Crédit Mobilier, "the leader of industry," is withdrawing its support. However this may be, it is certain that a very large number of new undertakings are brought out in France, and that the commencement of these is avowedly promoted by the Crédit Mobilier. A well-informed correspondent of the *Economist*, writing, on the 12th July, before the straits of the autumn, and therefore without any temptation to find "facts" to account for the scarcity of money, wrote as follows: "The manner in which French capitalists and speculators are extending their relations to foreign countries, is one of the most remarkable signs of the times, and affords an astonishing contrast to the extreme timidity which characterised them a few years ago, when it required English capital and enterprise to convince them that railways in France itself might be made profitable. At present they have got under their exclusive control railways in Switzerland, in Austria, in Italy, in Spain, in Holland, and in Belgium; they have established Crédit Mobiliers in Madrid and Turin, are about to do the same in Lisbon, and are trying to do the same at St. Petersburg and

Constantinople; they are endeavouring to obtain concessions of railways in Russia; they have established a large bank at Darmstadt, and will not rest until they get one at Constantinople; they recently got up a Crédit Mobilier at Brussels; and though the Government has not thought fit to authorise it for the present, they are sure of getting it sanctioned in time; they hold important concessions of mines and coal-pits in Spain, in the Rhenish provinces, and in Silesia; they hold a large, and in some cases a predominating, interest in numerous railways, iron-works, coal-pits, and banks in Belgium; they are about to establish lines of gigantic steamers to ply between different ports of France and Brazil, the United States, the West Indies, etc.; they are taking the lead in the project for cutting through the isthmus at Suez; and they have a pretty considerable interest in the omnibuses of London. As regards foreign enterprise, at least in Europe, they have certainly within the last few years cast the English completely into the shade. Foreigners who now want railways made, and mines worked, and banks established, or money for any other enterprise whatever, do not go to London as they used to do—they come to Paris. And at this very moment France is under engagements to supply to foreign countries at least £40,000,000 sterling in the space of some half-dozen years. Now it may be quite true that this sudden fervour of the French for foreign undertakings is but one phase of the industrial, money-getting mania which now possesses them; and it is quite true, too, that many of the enterprises they take up are regarded less on their intrinsic merits than as an additional element in stock-jobbing operations on the Paris Bourse. But still it is a question whether Englishmen have not of late shown somewhat too much supineness in foreign commercial affairs generally; and whether, in particular, they have not fallen into the

habit of regarding French railways, French Crédit Mobiliers, and French everything, as the only matters worthy of interest on the entire Continent." The domestic investments have not been trifling. M. Rouher, the Minister of Finance, has recently explained to us what the cost of French railways has been :—

From 1852 to 1854 (both exclusive) was		£27,915,112
In 1855	„ „ „	19,424,206
„ 1856	„ „ „	19,154,228
Total		66,493,606

The whole previous expenditure of France on railways was very much about the same sum ; so that during the reign of Louis Napoleon, France has expended on this sort of investment as much as she had before expended in all her previous history. This would be a great effort for a country not very renowned for commercial activity, even if it stood alone ; but we must add to it all the expenditure on public works, edifices, and useful undertakings in various parts of France, and in Paris especially, which mark the reign of the present Emperor. It is impossible that this vast outlay should not try the resources of any nation. The recent scarcity of money proves them to have done so. Even in that which the Crédit Mobilier considers its peculiar usefulness, it has probably been an unnecessary stimulant, administered just when there was occasion for a warning and a restraint.

It is to be remembered likewise, that these great undertakings are commenced either during, or just after, a long war. It is difficult to imagine that they should not strain the movable resources of a country which is not rich in proportion to her political importance ; whose saving classes

would be terrified at the idea of their money going abroad; where the system of banking is so imperfect as to leave much money in the keeping of the original accumulators, under the thatch of houses, or in corners of cottages, in hands and places where there is no chance of its becoming available.

So far, therefore, from considering his encouragement of industry as one of the great titles which will ennoble (for so his admirers teach) the reign of Louis Napoleon in the eyes of a distant posterity, we believe that the foundation of such an institution as the Crédit Mobilier with a particular view is utterly unsuitable to the proper aims of a government, and is likely to be very mischievous. Already, indeed, it seems to have produced great evils. Although the legitimate commerce of France is, according to the best-qualified judges, extremely healthy,—while its real merchants and shopkeepers are driving a steady business, neither wishing for unusual credit nor entering into unusual speculations,—the rate of interest has been higher than has been known for many years. The legitimate trader has been stinted. Some of the capital usually advanced to him has been withdrawn from the country, some sunk in railways at home; but the greatest demand has been on the Bourse to meet an extravagant and mischievous craving for accommodation from persons who have entered into speculations beyond their means, and who are endeavouring to avoid the certain loss of immediate realisation by paying any rates for the necessary loans. The whole sound, saving, laborious industry of the country is crippled to meet the wants of some speculators, who wish to scheme and spend, but not to save or work. This would be dangerous in any country, but in the present state of France it is especially dangerous there. Nothing is more striking in M. de Tocqueville's new book than the cold and guarded melancholy with which he regards the increas-

ing inclination of his countrymen for money-making pursuits. It is one of his objections to a combination of equality and absolutism, to a despot appointed by the democracy. "Men in such countries," he tells us, "being no longer connected together by any ties of caste, of class, of corporation, of family, are but too easily inclined to think of nothing but their private interests, ever too ready to consider themselves only, and to sink into the narrow precincts of self, in which all public virtue is extinguished. Despotism, instead of combating this tendency, renders it irresistible; for it deprives its subjects of every common passion, of every mutual want, of all necessity of combining together, of all occasions of acting together. It immures them in private life: they already tended to separation; despotism isolates them: they were already chilled in their mutual regard; despotism reduces them to ice. In such societies, in which nothing is stable, every man is incessantly stimulated by the fear of falling and by eagerness to rise; and as money, while it has become the principal mark by which men are classed and distinguished, has acquired an extraordinary mobility, passing without cessation from hand to hand, transforming the condition of persons, raising or lowering that of families, there is scarcely a man who is not compelled to make desperate and continual efforts to retain or acquire it. The desire to be rich at any cost, the love of business, the passion of lucre, the pursuit of comfort and of material pleasures, are therefore in such communities the prevalent passions. They are easily diffused through all classes, they penetrate even to those classes which had hitherto been most free from them, and would soon enervate and degrade them all, if nothing checked their influence. But it is of the very essence of despotism to favour and extend that influence. These debilitating passions assist its work: they divert and

engross the imaginations of men away from public affairs, and cause them to tremble at the bare idea of a revolution. Despotism alone can lend them the secrecy and the shade which put cupidity at its ease, and enable men to make dishonourable gains whilst they brave dishonour. Without despotic government such passions would be strong: with it they are sovereign."

If the commerce were of the healthy and legitimate sort which is based on regular industry, this criticism might need qualification. It might be thought to be the expression, if not of a disappointed man, yet of a disappointed literary class. But there is nothing to be alleged against it if the commerce be one of mere bargain and sale, if it lead to no healthy industry, if it foster the desire of gain without the labour which ennobles it. As times go, the making of money by work is perhaps the most innocent employment of man; but no passion is so dangerous as an avarice which is at the same time inactive and intense.

Such are the evil consequences which a government almost inevitably draws upon it by attempting to control or direct the natural industry of individuals. The aim at a monopoly, as we know, is a mistake. Great evils may and do arise under the *régime* of competition, but they are self-corrective. Certain persons attempt to make a profit in a mistaken way. The issue proves that they were wrong: they fail. Wiser men who never shared in the belief, timid men who wished some one else to try it first, are unaffected. The world profits, or might profit, from the experience. The operation of a single large company is very different. It runs its career alone; it does what no ordinary trader would attempt; neither its failure nor success are guides to ordinary commerce. We need not touch what even Mr. Cobden now calls the tedium of a free-trade argument. The very evils of competition instruct the competitors; the

failure of a monopoly can only instruct the monopolist, and him it destroys.[1]

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[1] In 1856 there were strong antipathies against the Emperor Napoleon, and every act by him was misrepresented by his adversaries. The Crédit Mobilier was not, as then supposed, simply a machine for gambling on the Bourse authorised to Court favourites. It was the work of hardy pioneers, the Péreires and Michel Chevalier, I believe, who were far in advance of their age, like the Emperor himself, as he proved later in concluding the treaty of Commerce with England. The Crédit Mobilier was a brilliant meteor, and gave such an impetus to the spirit of enterprise as had never before been witnessed. The number of companies launched by it fill nearly a page of McCourtoe's *History of Banks in France.* A great many still exist and have become great institutions, like the Paris Gas, Omnibus, and Cab Companies, the Transatlantic Steamship Company; railways in Russia, Spain, France, and elsewhere; the Belgian Vieille Montagne Zinc Works, the Ottoman Bank, etc. Unfortunately it undertook too much and eventually came to grief, and had to go into liquidation, sometime before the war of 1870, and the failure was followed by the prosecution of the old directors. (J. Longhurst, 1895.)

MEMOIR OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES WILSON.[1]

(1860.)

PERHAPS some of the subscribers to the *Economist* would not be unwilling to read a brief memoir of Mr. Wilson, even if the events narrated were in no respect peculiar. They might possibly be interested in the biography of an author of whose writings they have read so many, even if the narrative related no marked transitions and no characteristic events. But there were in Mr. Wilson's life several striking changes. The scene shifts from the manufactory of a small Scotch hatter in a small Scotch town, to London—to the Imperial Parliament—to the English Treasury—to the Council Board of India. Such a biography may be fairly expected to have some interest. The life perhaps of no *Political Economist* has been more eventful.

James Wilson was born at Hawick, in Roxburghshire, on 3rd June, 1805. His father, of whose memory he always spoke with marked respect, was a thriving man of business, extensively engaged in the woollen manufacture of that place. He was the fourth son in a family of fifteen children, of whom, however, only ten reached maturity. Of his mother, who died when he was very young, he scarcely retained any remembrance in after-life. As to his early years little is now recollected, except that he was a very mild and serious boy, usually successful during school hours, but not usually successful in the play-ground.

[1] This was published as a supplement to the *Economist*, soon after Mr. Wilson's death in 1860.

As Mr. Wilson's father was an influential Quaker, he was sent when ten years old to a Quaker school at Ackworth, where he continued for four years. At that time—it may surprise some of those who knew him in later life to be told—he was so extremely fond of books as to wish to be a teacher; and as his father allowed his sons to choose their line in life, he was sent to a seminary at Earl's Colne in Essex, to qualify himself for that occupation. But the taste did not last long. As we might expect, the natural activity of his disposition soon induced him to regret his choice of a sedentary life. He wrote to Hawick, "I would rather be the most menial servant in my father's mill than be a teacher"; and he was permitted to return home at once.

Many years later he often narrated that after leaving Earl's Colne, he had much wished to study for the Scottish Bar, but the rules of the Society of Friends, as then understood, would not allow his father to consent to the plan. He was sometimes inclined half to regret that he had not been able to indulge this taste, and he was much pleased at being told by a great living advocate that "if he had gone to the Bar he would have been very successful". But at the time there was no alternative, and at sixteen he accordingly commenced a life of business. He did not, however, lose at once his studious predilections. For some years at least he was in the habit of reading a good deal, very often till late in the night. It was indeed then that he acquired almost all the knowledge of books which he ever possessed. In later life he was much too busy to be a regular reader, and he never acquired the habit of catching easily the contents of books or even of articles in the interstices of other occupations. Whatever he did, he did thoroughly. He would not read even an article in a newspaper if he could well help doing so; but if he read it at all, it was with as much slow, deliberate attention as if he were perusing a Treasury minute.

At the early age we have mentioned he commenced his business life by being apprenticed to a small hat manufacturer at Hawick; and it is still remembered that he showed remarkable care and diligence in mastering all the minutiæ of the trade. There was, indeed, nothing of the *amateur* man of business about him at any time. After a brief interval his father purchased his master's business for him and for an elder brother, named William, and the two brothers in conjunction continued to carry it on at Hawick during two or three years with much energy. So small a town, however, as Hawick then was, afforded no scope for enterprise in this branch of manufacture, and they resolved to transfer themselves to London.

Accordingly, in 1824, Mr. Wilson commenced a mercantile life in London (the name of the firm being Wilson, Irwin & Wilson), and was very prosperous and successful for many years. His pecuniary gains were considerable, and to the practical instruction which he then obtained he always ascribed his success as an economist and a financier. "Before I was twenty years of age," he said at Devonport in 1859, "I was partner in a firm in London, and I can only say, if there is in my life one event which I regard with satisfaction more than another, it is that I had then an opportunity of obtaining experience by observation which has contributed in the main to what little public utility I have since been to my country. During these few years I became acquainted—well acquainted—with the middle classes of this country. I also became acquainted in some degree with the working classes; and also, to a great extent, with the foreign commerce of this country in pretty nearly all parts of the world; and I can only say the information and the experience I thus derived have been to me in my political career of greater benefit than I can now describe."

In 1831 the firm of Wilson, Irwin & Wilson was dis-

solved by mutual consent. But Mr. Wilson (under the firm of James Wilson & Co.) continued to carry on the same kind of business, and continued to obtain the same success. He began in 1824 with £2000, the gift of his father, and in 1837 was worth nearly £25,000—a fair result for so short a period, and evincing a steady business-like capacity and judgment; for it was the fruit not of sudden success in casual speculation, but of regular attention during several years to one business. From circumstances which we shall presently state, he was very anxious that this part of his career should be very clearly understood.

During these years Mr. Wilson led the life of a prosperous and intellectual man of business. He married,[1] and formed an establishment suitable to his means, first near his manufactory in London, and afterwards at Dulwich. He took great pleasure in such intellectual society as he could obtain; was specially fond of conversing on political economy, politics, statistics, and the other subjects with which he was subsequently so busily occupied.[2] Through life it was one of his remarkable peculiarities to be a *very animated* man, talking by preference and by habit on *inanimate* subjects. All the *verve*, vigour, and life which lively people put into exciting pursuits, he put into topics which are usually

[1] He was married on 5th January, 1832, to Miss Elizabeth Preston, of Newcastle, and this has given rise to a statement that he was once in business at Newcastle. This is, however, an entire mistake. He was never in business anywhere except at Hawick and London. It may be added, that on the occasion of his marriage he voluntarily ceased to be a member of the Society of Friends, for whom he always, however, retained a high respect. During the rest of his life he was a member of the Church of England.

[2] Among his friends of this period, should be especially mentioned Mr. G. R. Porter, of the Board of Trade, the author of *The Progress of the Nation*, whose mind he described twenty years later as the most accurate he had ever known.

thought very dry. He discussed the Currency or the Corn-laws with a relish and energy which made them interesting to almost every one. "How pleasant it is," he used to say, "to talk a subject out," and he frequently suggested theories in the excitement of conversation upon his favourite topics which he had never thought of before, but to which he ever afterwards attached, as was natural, much importance. The instructiveness of his conversation was greatly increased as his mind progressed and his experience accumulated. But his genial liveliness and animated vigour were the same during his early years of business life as they were afterwards when he filled important offices of state in England and in Calcutta. Few men can have led a more continuously prosperous and happy life than he did during those years. Unfortunately it was not to continue.

In 1836, or thereabouts, Mr. Wilson was unfortunately induced to commence a speculation in indigo, in conjunction with a gentleman in Scotland. It was expected that indigo would be scarce, and that the price would rise rapidly in consequence. Such would indeed appear to have been the case for a short period, since the first purchases in which Mr. Wilson took part yielded a profit. In consequence of this success, he was induced to try a larger venture,—indeed to embark most of his disposable capital. Unfortunately, the severe crisis of 1837 disturbed the usual course of all trades, and from its effect or from some other cause, indigo, instead of rising rapidly, fell rapidly. The effect on Mr. Wilson's position may be easily guessed. A very great capitalist would have been able to hold till better times, but he was not. "On 1st January," he said at Devonport, "in a given year, my capital was nearer £25,000 than £24,000, and it was all lost." Numerous stories were long circulated, most of them exaggerated, and the remainder wholly untrue, as to this period of misfortune in Mr. Wilson's life; but the

truth is very simple. As is usual in such cases, various arrangements were proposed and agreed to, were afterwards abandoned, and others substituted for them. A large bundle of papers carefully preserved by him records with the utmost accuracy the whole of the history. The final result will be best described in his own words at Devonport, which precisely correspond with the balance sheets and other documents still in existence. They are part of a speech in answer to a calumnious rumour that had been circulated in the town :—

"Now, how did I act on this occasion? and this is what this placard has reference to. By my own means alone, I was enabled at once to satisfy in full all claims against me individually, and to provide for the early payment of one-half of the whole of the demands against the firm, consisting of myself and three partners. I was further enabled, or the firm was enabled, at once to assign property of sufficient value, as was supposed, to the full satisfaction of the whole of the remainder of the liabilities. An absolute agreement was made, an absolute release was given, to all the partners; there was neither a bankruptcy nor insolvency, neither was the business stopped for one day. The business was continued under the new firm, with which I remained a partner, and from which I ultimately retired in good circumstances. Some years afterwards it turned out that the foreign property which was assigned for the remaining half of the debts of the old firm, of which I was formerly a partner, proved insufficient to discharge them. The legal liability was, as you know, all gone; the arrangement had been accepted—an arrangement calculated and believed by all parties to be sufficient to satisfy all claims in full; but when the affairs of the whole concern were fully wound up, finding that the foreign property had not realised what was anticipated, I had it, I am glad to say, in my power to place at my banker's, having ascertained the amount, a sum of money to discharge

all the remainder of that debt, which I considered morally, though not legally, due. This I did without any kind of solicitation—the thing was not named to me, and I am quite sure never were the gentlemen more taken by surprise than when a friend of mine waited on them privately in London, and presented each of them with a cheque for the balance due to them. Now, perhaps, I have myself to blame for this anonymous attack. I probably brought it on myself, for I always felt that if this matter were made public, it might look like an act of ostentatious obtrusion on my part, and therefore, when I put aside the sum of money necessary for the purpose, I made a request, in the letter I wrote to my bankers, desiring them as an especial favour that they would instruct their clerks to mention the matter to no one; and in order that it should be perfectly private, I employed a personal friend of my own in the city of London, in whose care I placed the whole of the cheques, to wait on those gentlemen and present each of them with a cheque, and I obtained from him a promise, and he from them, not to name the circumstance to any one." The secrecy thus enjoined was well preserved. Many of the most intimate friends of Mr. Wilson, and his family also, were entirely unacquainted with what he had done, and learnt it only through the accidental medium of an electioneering speech. It may be added, too, that some of those who knew the circumstances, and who have watched Mr. Wilson's subsequent career, believe that at no part of his life did he show greater business ability, self-command, and energy, than at the crisis of his mercantile misfortunes.

It is remarkable that the preface to Mr. Wilson's first pamphlet, on the *Influences of the Corn-laws*, is dated 1st March, 1839, the precise time at which he was negotiating with his creditors for a proper arrangement of his affairs; and to those who have had an opportunity of observing how

completely pecuniary misfortune unnerves and unmans men —mercantile men, perhaps, more than any others—it will not seem unworthy of remark that a careful pamphlet, with elaborate figures, instinct in every line with vigour and energy, should emanate from a man struggling with extreme pecuniary calamity, and daily harassed with the painful details of it.

After 1839 Mr. Wilson continued in business for several years, and with very fair success, considering that his capital was much diminished, and that the hat manufacture was in a state of transition. He finally retired in 1844, and invested most of his capital in the foundation and extension of the *Economist*.

These facts prove, as we believe, the conclusion which he was very desirous to make clear—that, though unfortunate on a particular occasion, Mr. Wilson was by no means, as a rule, unsuccessful in business. He did not at all like to have it said that he was fit to lay down the rules and the theory of business, but not fit to transact business itself. And the whole of his life, on the contrary, proves that he possessed an unusual capacity for affairs—an extraordinary *transacting* ability.

It may, however, be admitted that Mr. Wilson was in several respects by no means an unlikely man to meet, especially in early life, with occasional misfortune. To the last hour of his life he was always sanguine. He naturally looked at everything in a bright and cheerful aspect; his tendency was always to form a somewhat too favourable judgment both of things and men. One proof of this may be sufficient: he was five years Secretary of the Treasury, and he did not leave it a suspicious man.

Moreover, Mr. Wilson's temperament was very active and his mind was very fertile. And though in many parts of business these gifts are very advantageous, in many also

they are very dangerous, if not absolutely disadvantageous. Frequently they are temptations. Capital is always limited; often it is *very* limited; and therefore a man of business, who is managing his own capital, has only defined resources, and can engage only in a certain number of undertakings. But a person of active temperament and fertile mind will soon chafe at that restriction. His inventiveness will show him many ways in which money might easily be made, and he cannot but feel that with his energies he would like to make it. If he have besides a sanguine temperament, he will believe that he can make it. The records of unfortunate commerce abound in instances of men who have been unsuccessful because they had great mind, great energy, and great hope, but had not money in proportion. Some part of this description was, perhaps, applicable to Mr. Wilson in 1839, but exactly how much cannot, after the lapse of so many years, be now known with any accuracy.

Mr. Wilson's position in middle life was by no means unsuitable to a writer on the subjects in which he afterwards attained eminence. He had acquired a great knowledge of business through a long course of industrious years; he had proved by habitual success in business that his habitual judgment on it was sound and good. If he had been a man of only ordinary energy and only ordinary ability, he would probably have continued to grow regularly richer and richer. But by a single error natural to a very sanguine temperament and a very active mind, he had destroyed a great part of the results of his industry. He had a new career to seek. He was willing to expend on it the whole of his great energies. He was ready to take all the pains which were necessary to fit himself for success. When he wrote his first pamphlet he used to say that he thought "the sentences never would come right". In later life he considered three leading articles in the *Economist*, full of facts and

figures, an easy morning's work, which would not prevent his doing a good deal else too. Mr. Wilson was a finished man of business obliged by necessity to become a writer on business. Perhaps no previous education and no temporary circumstances could be conceived more likely to train a great financial writer and to stimulate his powers.

In 1839 Mr. Wilson published his *Influences of the Corn-laws;* in 1840, the *Fluctuations of Currency, Commerce, and Manufactures;* in 1841, *The Revenue; or, What should the Chancellor do?* in September, 1843, he established the *Economist.* The origin of the latter may be interesting to our readers. Mr. Wilson proposed to the editor of the *Examiner* that he should furnish gratuitously a certain amount of writing to that journal on economic and financial subjects; but the offer was declined, though with some regret, on account of the expense of type and paper. A special paper was, therefore, established, which proved in the end as important as the *Examiner* itself. From the first, Mr. Wilson was the sole proprietor of the *Economist,* though he obtained pecuniary assistance—especially from the kindness of Lord Radnor. He embarked some capital of his own in it from the first, and afterwards repaid all loans made to him for the purpose of establishing it.

It would not be suitable to the design of this memoir to give any criticism of Mr. Wilson's pamphlets, still less would it become the *Economist* to pronounce in any manner a judgment on itself. Nevertheless, it is a part of the melancholy duty we have undertaken to give some account of Mr. Wilson's characteristic position as a writer on Political Economy, and of the somewhat peculiar mode in which he dealt with that subject.

Mr. Wilson dealt with Political Economy like a practical man. Persons more familiar with the literature of science

might very easily be found. Mr. Wilson's faculty of reading was small, nor had he any taste for the more refined abstractions in which the more specially scientific political economists had involved themselves. "Political Economy," said Sydney Smith, "is become in the hands of Malthus and Ricardo, a school of metaphysics. All seem to agree what is to be done; the contention is how the subject is to be divided and defined. *Meddle with no such matters.*" We are far from alleging that this saying is just; nor would Mr. Wilson have by any means assented to it. But though he would have disavowed it in theory, it nevertheless embodies his instinctive feeling and characteristic practice. He "meddled with no such matters"; though he did not deny the utility of theoretical refinements, he habitually and steadily avoided them.

Mr. Wilson's predominating power was what may be called a business imagination. He had a great power of conceiving transactions. Political economy was to him the science of buying and selling, and of the ordinary bargains of men he had a very steady and distinct conception. In explaining such subjects he did not begin, as political economists have been wittily said to do, with "Suppose a man upon an island," but "What they do in the city is this. The real course of business is so and so." Most men of business will think this characteristic a great merit, and even a theoretical economist should not consider it a defect. The *practical* value of the science of political economy (the observation is an old one as to *all* sciences) lies in its "middle principles". The extreme abstractions from which such intermediate maxims are scientifically deduced lie at some distance from ordinary experience, and are not easily made intelligible to most persons, and when they *are* made intelligible, most persons do not know how to use them. But the intermediate maxims themselves are not so difficult;

they are easily comprehended and easily used. They have in them a practical life, and come home at once to the "business" and the "bosoms" of men. It was in these that Mr. Wilson excelled. His "business imagination" enabled him to see "what men did," and "why they did it"; "why they ought to do it," and "why they ought not to do it". His very clear insight into the real nature of mercantile transactions made him a great and almost an instinctive master of *statistical selection*. He could not help picking out of a mass of figures those which would tell most. He saw which were really material; he put them prominently and plainly forward, and he left the rest alone. Even now if a student of Parliamentary papers should alight on a return "moved for by Mr. Wilson," he will do well to give to it a more than ordinary attention, for it will be sure to contain something attainable, intelligible, and distinct.

Mr. Wilson's habit of always beginning with the facts, always arguing from the facts, and always ending with a result applicable to the facts, obtained for his writings an influence and a currency more extensive than would have been anticipated for any writings on political economy. It is not for the *Economist* to speak of the *Economist;* but we may observe that through the pages of this journal certain doctrines, whether true or false, have been diffused far more widely than they ever were in England before—far more widely than from their somewhat abstract nature we could expect them to be diffused—far more widely than they are diffused in any other country but this. The business-like method and vigorous simplicity of Mr. Wilson's arguments converted very many ordinary men of business, who would have distrusted any theoretical and abstruse disquisition, and would not have appreciated any elaborate refinements. Nor was this special influence confined to

mercantile men. It penetrated where it could not be expected to penetrate. The Duke of Wellington was, perhaps, more likely to be prejudiced against a theoretical political economist than any eminent man of his day; he belonged to the "pre-scientific period"; he had much of the impatient practicality incident to military insight; he was not likely to be very partial to the "doctrines of Mr. Huskisson";—nevertheless, the Duke early pointed out Mr. Wilson's writings to Lord Brougham as possessing especial practical value; and when the Duke at a much later period was disposed to object to the repeal of the Navigation Laws, Mr. Wilson had a special interview to convince him of its expediency.

Nor is this faculty of exposition by any means a trifling power. On many subjects it is a common saying "that he only discovers who proves"; but in practical politics we may almost say that he only discovers who convinces. It is of no use to have practical truths received by extraordinary men, unless they are also accepted by ordinary men. Whether Mr. Wilson was exactly a great writer, we will not discuss: but he was a great *belief-producer;* he had upon his own subjects a singular gift of *efficient* argument—a peculiar power of bringing home his opinions by convincing reasonings to convincible persons.

The time at which Mr. Wilson commenced his career as an economical writer was a singularly happy one. An economical century has elapsed since 1839. The Corn-laws were then in full force, and seemed likely to continue so; the agriculturists believed in them, and other classes acquiesced in them; the tentative reforms of Mr. Huskisson were half forgotten; our tariff perhaps contained some specimen of every defect—it certainly contained many specimens of most defects; duties abounded which cramped trade, which contributed nothing to the Exchequer, which

were maintained that a minority might believe they profited at the expense of the majority; all the now settled principles of commercial policy were unsettled; the "currency" was under discussion; the Bank of England had been reduced to accept a loan from the Bank of France; capitalists were disheartened and operatives disaffected; the industrial energies, which have since multiplied our foreign commerce, were then effectually impeded by legislative fetters and financial restraints. On almost all of these restraints Mr. Wilson had much to say.

Upon the Corn-laws Mr. Wilson developed a theory which was rare when he first stated it, but which was generally adopted afterwards, and which subsequent experience has confirmed. He was fond of narrating an anecdote which shows his exact position in 1839. There had just been a meeting of the Anti-Corn-law League at Manchester, and some speakers had maintained, with more or less vehemence, that the coming struggle was to be one of class against class, inasmuch as the Corn-laws were beneficial to the agriculturists, though they were injurious to manufacturers. The tendency of the argument was to set one part of the nation against another part. Mr. Wilson was travelling in the North, and was writing in a railway carriage part of the *Influences of the Corn-laws.* By chance a distinguished member of the League, whom Mr. Wilson did not know, happened to travel with him, and asked him what he was about. "I am writing on the Corn-laws," said Mr. Wilson, "something in answer to the rubbish they have been talking at Manchester." "You are a bold man," was the reply; "Protection is a difficult doctrine to support by argument." But it soon appeared that Mr. Wilson was the better Free-trader of the two. He held that the Corn-laws were injurious to all classes; that the agriculturists suffered from them as much as the manu-

facturers; that, in consequence, it was "rubbish" to raise a class-enmity on the subject, for the interest of all classes was the same.

"We cannot too much lament," he says in his *Influences of the Corn-laws*, "and deprecate the spirit of violence and exaggeration with which this subject has always been approached by each party, which no doubt has been the chief cause why so little of real truth or benefit has resulted from the efforts of either; the arguments on either side have been supported by such absurd and magnified statements of the influences of those prohibitory laws on their separate interests, as only to furnish each other with a good handle to turn the whole argument into ridicule. It therefore appears to be necessary to a just settlement of this great question, that these two parties should be first reconciled to a correct view of the real influences thus exerted over their interests, and the interests of the country at large; to a conviction that the imaginary fears of change on the one hand, and the exaggerated advantages expected on the other hand, are equally without foundation; that there are in reality no differences in the solid interests of either party; and that *individuals*, *communities*, or *countries* can only be prosperous in proportion to the prosperity of the whole." And he proposed to prove "that the agricultural interest has derived no benefit, but great injury, from the existing laws; and that the fears and apprehensions entertained of the ruinous consequences which would result to this interest by the adoption of a free and liberal policy with respect to the trade in corn, are without any foundation; that the value of this property, instead of being depreciated, in the aggregate, would be rather enhanced, and the general interests of the owners most decidedly enhanced thereby;" and, "that while incalculable benefit would arise to the manufacturing interest and the working population generally, in common with all classes of the community, from the adoption of such policy, nothing can be more erroneous than the belief that the price of provisions or labour would on the average be thereby cheapened, but that, on the contrary, the tendency would rather be to produce, by a state of generally increased prosperity, a higher average rate of each".

Whatever might be thought in 1839, in 1860 we can on one point have no doubt whatever. The repeal of the Corn-laws has been followed by the exact effect which Mr. Wilson

anticipated. Whether his argument was right or wrong, the result has corresponded with his anticipation. The agriculturists have prospered more—the manufacturers, the merchants, the operatives, all classes in a word, have prospered more since the Corn-laws were repealed, than they ever did before. As to abstract questions of politics there will always be many controversies; but upon a patent contemporaneous fact of this magnitude there cannot be a controversy.

It is indisputable also that, for the purposes of the Anti-Corn-law agitation, Mr. Wilson's view was exceedingly opportune. Mr. Cobden said not long ago (we quote the substance correctly even if the words are wrong), "I never made any progress with the Corn-law question while it was stated as a question of class against class". And a careful inquirer will find that such is the real moral of the whole struggle. If it had continued to be considered solely or mainly as a manufacturer's question, it might not have been settled to this hour. In support of this opinion, Mr. Wilson made many speeches at the meetings of the Anti-Corn-law League, though he had little taste for the task of agitation.

We cannot give even an analysis of Mr. Wilson's arguments—our space is too brief—but we will enumerate one or two of the principal points.

He maintained that, under our protective laws, the agriculturists never had the benefit of a high price, and always suffered the evil of a low price. When our crop was scanty, it was necessary to sell the small quantity at a high price, or the farmer could not be remunerated. But exactly at that moment foreign corn was permitted by law to be imported. In consequence, during bad years the farmer was exposed to difficulty and disaster, which were greater because, in expectation of an English demand, large stocks were often hoarded on the Continent, and at once poured in to

prevent the home-grower compensating himself for a bad harvest by an equivalent rise of price.

Nor was the farmer better off in very plentiful years. There was a surplus in this country, and that surplus could not be exported, for the price of wheat was always lower abroad than here. The effect is evident. As corn is an article of the first necessity, a certain quantity of it will always be consumed, but more than that quantity will not be readily consumed. A slight surplus is, therefore, invariably found to lower the price of such articles excessively. In very good years the farmer had to sell his crop at an unremuneratingly low price, while in very bad years he was prevented from obtaining the high price which alone could compensate him for his outlay. Between the effects of the two sorts of years his condition was deplorable, and Parliamentary committees were constantly appointed to investigate it.

Mr. Wilson also explained how much these fluctuations in price contracted the home demand for agricultural produce. The manufacturing districts were, he showed, subjected by the Corn-laws to alternate periods of great excitement and great depression. When corn was very cheap, the mass of the community had much to spend on other things; when corn was very dear, they had very little to spend on those things. In consequence, the producers of "other things" were sometimes stimulated by a great demand, and at other times deadened by utter slackness. The labouring classes in the manufacturing districts acquired in periods of plenty a certain taste for what to them were luxuries, and in periods of scarcity were naturally soured at being deprived of them. The manufacturers were frequently induced to invest additional capital by sudden augmentations of demand, and were often ruined by its sudden cessation. It was therefore impossible that the manufacturing classes could be steady

customers of the agriculturists, for their own condition was fluctuating and unsteady.

Mr. Wilson also showed that if the landed interest was injured by the effects of the Corn-laws, this was of itself enough to injure the manufacturing interests.

"The connection," he wrote, "between the manufacturer and the landed interest in this country is much closer than is generally admitted or believed; not only is the manufacturer dependent on the landed interest for the large portion of his goods which they immediately consume, but also for a very large portion of what he exports to the most distant countries. All commerce is, either directly or indirectly, a simple exchange of the surplus products of one country for those of another. It is therefore a first essential that we should be able to take the cotton of America, the sugar and coffee of India, the silk and teas of China, before they can take our manufactures; and if this be necessary, then must it follow that in proportion to the extent to which we can take their produce, will they be enabled to take our manufactures. Therefore, whatever portion of these products is consumed in this country by the landed interest, must to that extent enable the manufacturer to export his goods in return; and thus any causes which increase this ability on the part of the landed interest to consume, must give a corresponding additional ability to the manufacturers to export. Every pound of coffee or sugar, every ounce of tea, every article of luxury, the produce of foreign climes, whether consumed within the castles and halls of our wealthiest landowners, or in the humble cottages of our lowliest peasantry, alike represent some portion of the exports of this country. On the other hand, the dependence of the landowner is no less twofold on the manufacturer and merchant. He is not only dependent upon them for their own immediate consumption, but also for the consumption of whatever food enters into the cost price of their goods. Although the English farmer does not export his corn or his other produce in the exact shape and form in which he produces them, they constitute not the less on that account a distinct portion of the exports of this country, and that in the best of all possible forms. Just as much as the manufacturer exports the wool or the silk which enters into the fabrics of those materials, does he export the corn which paid for the labour of spinning and weaving them. It would be an utter impossibility that this country could consume its agricultural produce but for our extensive manufacturing population; or

that the value of what would be consumed could be near its present rate. If without this aid our agricultural produce were as great as it now is, a large portion would have to seek a market in distant countries: it would then have to be exported in the exact form in which it is produced; the expenses of which being so large would reduce very greatly from its value and net price, and the landed interest would be immediately affected thereby. But, as it is, the produce of the land is exported in the condensed form of manufactured goods, at a comparatively trifling expense, which secures a high value to it here. Thus, for example, a few bales of silk or woollen goods may contain as much wheat in their value as would freight a whole ship. To this advantage the landed interest is indebted, exclusively, for the very superior value of property and produce in this country to any other; because, by our great manufacturing superiority, a market is found for our produce over the whole world, conveyed in the cheapest and most condensed form. While the Chinese, or Indians, buy our cottons, our silks, or our woollens, they buy a portion of the grain and other produce of the land of this country; and therefore the producer here, while indulging in the delicacies or luxuries of Oriental climes, may only be consuming a portion of the golden heads of wheat which had gracefully waved in his own fields at a former day. Is it not, therefore, sufficiently clear that no circumstance whatever can either improve or injure one of these interests without immediately in the same way affecting the other? The connection is so close that it is impossible to separate or distinguish them. Any circumstance which limits our commerce must limit our market for agricultural produce; and any possible circumstance which deteriorates the condition of our agriculturists must deteriorate our commerce, by limiting our imports, and consequently our exports. These are general principles, and are capable of extension to the whole world, in all places, and at all times; and the same principle as is thus shown to connect and combine the different interests of any one country, just as certainly operates in producing a similar affect between different countries; and we ardently hope, ere long, to find not only the petty jealousies between different portions of the same community entirely removed, but that all countries will learn that a free and unrestricted co-operation with each other in matters of commerce can only tend to the general benefit and welfare of all."

We do not say that these propositions were exactly discoveries of Mr. Wilson. During the exciting discussion of a great public question, the most important truths which

relate to it are "in the air" of the age; many persons see them, or half see them; and it is impossible to trace the precise parentage of any of them. But we do say that these opinions were exactly suited to the broad and practical understanding of Mr. Wilson; that they were very effectively illustrated by him—more effectively probably than by any other writer; that he thought them out for himself with but little knowledge of previous theories; that they, principally, raised Free-trade from a class question to a national question; that to them, whether advocated by Mr. Wilson or by others, the success of the Anti-Corn-law agitation was in a great measure owing; that whatever doubt may formerly have been felt, an ample trial has now proved them to be true.

Mr. Wilson's pamphlet entitled *The Revenue; or, What should the Chancellor do?* which attracted considerable attention when it was published in 1841, is worth reading now, though dated so many years ago; for it contains an outline of the financial policy which Sir Robert Peel commenced, and which Mr. Gladstone has now almost completed. This pamphlet, which is not very short (it has twenty-seven moderate pages), was begun as an article for the *Morning Chronicle*, but proved too long for that purpose. It was written with almost inconceivable rapidity—nearly all, we believe, in a single night—though its principles and its many figures will bear a critical scrutiny even now.

In the briefest memoir of Mr. Wilson it is necessary to say something of the currency; but it will not be advisable to say very much. If, however, we could rely on the patience of our readers, we should say a good deal. On no subject, perhaps, did Mr. Wilson take up a more characteristic position. He saw certain broad principles distinctly and steadily, and to these he firmly adhered, no

matter what refined theories were suggested, or what the opinion of others might be.

Mr. Wilson was a stern bullionist. He held that a five-pound note was a promise to pay five pounds. He answered Sir R. Peel's question, "What is a pound?" with Sir Robert's own answer. He said it was a certain specified quantity of gold metal. He held that all devices for aiding industry by issuing inconvertible notes were certainly foolish, and might perhaps be mischievous. He held that industry could only be really aided by additional *capital*—by new machines, new instruments, new raw material; that an addition to a paper *currency* was as useless to aid deficient capital as it was to feed a hungry population.

Mr. Wilson held, secondly, that the *sine quâ non*, the great prerequisite to a good paper currency, was the maintenance of an adequate reserve by the issuer. He believed that a banker should look at his liabilities as a whole—the notes which he has in circulation and the deposits he has in his ledger taken together; and should retain a sufficient portion of them (say one-third) in cash, or in something equivalent to cash, in daily readiness to pay them at once. Mr. Wilson considered that bankers might be trusted to keep such a reserve, as they would be ruined, sooner or later, if they did not; and if the notes issued by them were always convertible at the pleasure of the holder, he believed that the currency would never be depreciated.

He thought, however, that, as bank-notes must pass from hand to hand in the market, and as in practice most persons—most traders, especially—must take them in payment whether they wish to do so or not, some special security might properly be required for their payment. He would have allowed any one who liked to issue bank-notes on depositing Consols to a sufficient amount—the amount,

that is, of the notes issued, and an adequate percentage in addition.

Lastly, Mr. Wilson believed that the bank-note circulation exercised quite a secondary and unimportant influence upon prices and upon transactions, in comparison with the auxiliary currency of cheques and credits, which has indefinitely augmented during the last thirty years. So far from regarding the public as constantly ready for an unlimited supply of bank-notes, he thought that it was only in times of extreme panic, when this auxiliary currency is diminished and disturbed, that the bank-notes in the hands of the public either could or would be augmented. He believed that the public only kept in their hands as many notes as they wanted for their own convenience, and that all others were in the present day paid back to the banker immediately and necessarily.

Unfortunately, however, the currency is not discussed in England with very exact reference to abstract principles. The popular question of every thinker is, "Are you in favour of Peel's Bill, or are you against it?" And this mode of discussing the subject always placed Mr. Wilson in a position of some difficulty. He concurred in the aim of Sir R. Peel, but objected to his procedure. He wished to secure the convertibility of the bank-note. He believed that the Act of 1844 indirectly induced the Bank Directors to keep more bullion than they would keep otherwise, and in so far he thought it beneficial; but he also thought that the advantages obtained by it were purchased at a needless price; that they might have been obtained much more cheaply; that the machinery of the Act aggravated every panic; that it tended to fix the attention of the public on bank-notes, and so fostered the mischievous delusion that the augmented issue of paper currency would strengthen industry; that it neglected to take account of other forms

of credit which are equally important with bank-notes; that, "*for one week in ten years*"—the week of panic—it created needless and intense apprehension, and so tended to cause the ruin of some solvent commercial men. In brief, though he fully believed the professed object of Sir R. Peel—the convertibility of the bank-note—to be beneficial and inestimable, he as fully believed the special means selected by him to be inconvenient and pernicious.

Opinions akin to Mr. Wilson's, if not identical with them, are very commonly now entertained, both by practical men of business and by professional economists. The younger school of thinkers who have had before them the working of the Act of 1844 and the events of 1847 and 1857, and are not committed by any of the older controversies, are especially inclined to them. Yet from peculiar causes they have not been so popular as Mr. Wilson's other opinions. His views of finance and of the effect of Free-trade, which were half heresies when he announced them, have now become almost axioms. But the truth of his currency theory is still warmly controverted. The reason is this: Sir R. Peel's Act is a sort of compromise which is suited to the English people. It was probably intended by its author as a preliminary step; it undoubtedly suits no strict theory; it certainly has great marks of incompleteness; but, "it works tolerably well"; if it produces evils at a crisis, "crises come but seldom"; in ordinary times commerce "goes on very fairly". The pressure of practical evil upon the English people has never yet been so great as to induce them to face the unpleasant difficulties of the abstract currency question. Mr. Wilson's opinions have, therefore, never been considered by practical men for a practical object, and it is only when so considered that any opinions of his can be duly estimated. Their essentially moderate character, too, is unfavourable to them—not, indeed, among careful

inquirers, but in the hubbub of public controversy. The only great party which has as yet attacked Sir Robert Peel's Bill is that which desires an extensive issue of inconvertible currency; but to them Mr. Wilson was as much opposed as Sir Robert Peel himself. The two watchwords of the controversy are "caution" and "expansion": the advocates of the Act of 1844 have seized on the former, the Birmingham school on the latter; the intermediate, and, as we think, juster, opinions of Mr. Wilson have had no party cry to aid them, and they have not as yet therefore obtained the practical influence which he never ceased to anticipate and to hope for them. No more need be said upon the currency question—perhaps we have already said too much; but to those who knew Mr. Wilson well, no subject is more connected with his memory: he was so fond of expounding it, that its very technicalities are, in the minds of some, associated with his voice and image.

But it was not by mere correctness of economical speculation that Mr. Wilson was to rise to eminence. A very accurate knowledge of even the more practical aspects of economical science is not of itself a productive source of income. By the foundation of the *Economist* Mr. Wilson secured for himself, during the rest of his life, competence and comfort, but it was not solely or simply by writing good political economy in it. The organisation of a first-rate commercial paper in 1843 required a great inventiveness and also a great discretion. Nothing of the kind then existed; it was not known what the public most wished to know on business interests; the best shape of communicating information had to be invented in detail. The labour of creating such a paper and of administering it during its early stages is very great; and might well deter most men even of superior ability from attempting it. At this period of his life Mr. Wilson used to superintend the whole of the

Economist; to write all the important leaders, nearly all of the unimportant ones; to make himself master of every commercial question as it arose; to give practical details as to the practical aspects of it; to be on the watch for every kind of new commercial information; to spend hours in adapting it to the daily wants of commercial men. He often worked till far into the morning, and impressed all about him with wonder at the anxiety, labour, and exhaustion he was able to undergo. As has been stated, for some months after the commencement of the *Economist* he was still engaged in his former business; and after he relinquished that, he used to write the City article and also leaders for the *Morning Chronicle*, at the very time that he was doing on his own paper far more than most men would have had endurance of mind or strength of body for. Long afterwards he used to speak of this period as far more exhausting than the most exhausting part of a laborious public life. "Our public men," he once said, "do not know what anxiety means; they have never known what it is to have their own position dependent on their own exertions." In 1843, and for some time afterwards, he had himself to bear extreme labour and great anxiety together; and even his iron frame was worn and tired by the conjunction.

Within seven years from the foundation of the *Economist*, Mr. Wilson dealt effectively and thoroughly with three first-rate subjects—the railway mania, the famine in Ireland, and the panic of 1847, in addition to the entire question of Free-trade, which was naturally the main topic of economical teaching in those years. On all these three topics he explained somewhat original opinions, which were novelties, if not paradoxes then, though they are very generally believed now. To his writings on the railway mania he was especially fond of recurring, since he believed that by his warnings, very effectively brought out and very constantly reiterated.

he had "saved several men their fortunes" at that time.

The success of the *Economist*, and the advantage which the proprietor of it would derive from a first-hand acquaintance with political life, naturally led him to think of gaining a seat in Parliament, and an accidental conversation at Lord Radnor's table fixed his attention on the borough of Westbury. After receiving a requisition, he visited the place, explained his political sentiments at much length "from an old cart," and believed that he saw sufficient chances of success to induce him to take a house there. He showed considerable abilities in electioneering, and a close observer once said of him, "Mr. Wilson may, or may not, be the best political economist in England, but depend upon it he is the *only* political economist who would ever come in for the borough of Westbury". Though nominally a borough, the constituency is half a rural one, much under the influence of certain Conservative squires. The Liberal party were in 1847 only endeavouring to emancipate themselves from a yoke to which they have now again succumbed. Except for Mr. Wilson's constant watchfulness, his animated geniality, his residence on the spot, his knowledge of every voter by sight, the Liberal party might never have been successful there. A certain expansive frankness of manner and a wonderful lucidity in explaining his opinions almost to any one, gave Mr. Wilson great advantages as a popular candidate; and it was very remarkable to find these qualities connected with a strong taste for treating very dry subjects upon professedly abstract principles. So peculiar a combination had the success which it merited. In the summer of 1847 he was elected to serve in Parliament for Westbury.

Mr. Wilson made his first speech in the House of Commons[1] on the motion for a Committee to inquire into the com-

[1] On 30th November, 1847.

mercial distress at that time prevalent. And it was considered an act of intellectual boldness for a new member to explain his opinions on so difficult a subject as the currency, especially as they were definitely opposed to a measure supported by such overwhelming Parliamentary authority as the Act of 1844 then was. Judging from the report in "Hansard," and from the recollections of some who heard it, the speech was a successful one. It is very clear and distinct, and its tone is very emphatic, without ever ceasing to be considerate and candid. It contains a sufficient account of Mr. Wilson's tenets on the currency—so good an account, indeed, that when he read it ten years later, in the panic of 1857, he acknowledged that he did not think he could add a word to it. At the time, however, the test of its Parliamentary success was not the absolute correctness of its abstract principles, but, to use appropriate and technical language, "its getting a rise out of Peel". Sir Robert had used some certainly inconclusive arguments in favour of his favourite measure, and Mr. Wilson made that inconclusiveness so very clear that he thought it necessary to rise "and explain," which, on such a subject, was deemed at the moment a great triumph for a first speech.

As might be expected from so favourable a commencement, Mr. Wilson soon established a Parliamentary reputation. He was not a formal orator, and did not profess to be so. But he had great powers of exposition, singular command of telling details upon his own subjects, a very pleasing voice, a grave but by no means inanimate manner—qualities which are amply sufficient to gain the respectful attention of the House of Commons. And Mr. Wilson did gain it. But speaking is but half, and in the great majority of cases by far the smaller half, of the duties of a member of Parliament. Mr. Wilson was fond of quoting a saying of Sir R. Peel's, "That the way to get on in the House

of Commons was to take a place and sit there". He adopted this rule himself, was constant in his attendance at the House, a good listener to other men, and always ready to take trouble with troublesome matters. These plain and business-like qualities, added to his acknowledged ability and admitted acquaintance with a large class of subjects upon which knowledge is rare, gave Mr. Wilson a substantial influence in the House of Commons in an unusually short time. The Corn-laws had been repealed, the pitched battle of Free-trade had been fought and won, but much yet remained to be done in carrying out its principles with effective precision, in applying them to articles other than corn, in exposing the fallacies still abundantly current, and in answering the exceptional case which every trade in succession set up for an exceptional protection. These were painful and complex matters of detail, wearisome to very many persons, and rewarding with no *éclat* those who took the trouble to master and explain them. But Mr. Wilson shrank from no detail. For several years before he had a seat in the House, he had been used to explain such topics in countless conversations with the most prominent Free-traders and in the *Economist*. He now did so in the House of Commons, and his influence correspondingly increased. He was able to do an important work better than any one else could do it; and, in English public life, real work rightly done at the right season scarcely ever fails to meet with a real reward.

That Mr. Wilson early acquired considerable Parliamentary reputation is evinced by the best of all proofs. He was offered office before he had been six months in the House of Commons, though he had, as the preceding sketch will have made evident, no aristocratic connections—though he was believed to be a poorer man than he really was—though writing political articles for newspapers has

never been in England the sure introduction to political power which it formerly was in France—though, on the contrary, it has in general been found a hindrance. In a case like Mr. Wilson's, the prize of office was a sure proof of evident prowess in the Parliamentary arena.

The office which was offered to Mr. Wilson was one of the Secretaryships of the Board of Control. Mr. Wilson related at Hawick his reluctance to accept it, and his reason. Never having given any special attention to Indian topics, he thought it would be absurd and ridiculous in him to accept an office which seemed to require much special knowledge. But Lord John Russell, with "that knowledge of public affairs which long experience ensures," at once explained to him that a statesman, under our Parliamentary system, must be prepared to serve the Queen "whenever he may be called on"; and accordingly that he must be ready to take any office which he can fill, without at all considering whether it is that which he can best fill. After some deliberation, Mr. Wilson acknowledged the wisdom of this advice, and accepted the office offered him. Long afterwards, in the speech at Hawick to which we have alluded, he said that without the preliminary knowledge of India which he acquired at the Board of Control, he should never have been able to undertake the regulation of her finances.

When once installed in his office, he devoted himself to it with his usual unwearied industry. And at least on one occasion he had to deal with a congenial topic. The introduction of railways into India was opposed on many grounds, most of which are now forgotten—such as "the effect upon the native mind," "the impossibility of inducing the Hindoos to travel in that manner," and the like; and more serious difficulties occurred in considering the exact position which the Government should assume with regard to such great

undertakings in such singular circumstances—the necessity, on the one hand, in an Asiatic country where the State is the sole motive power, of the Government's doing something—and the danger, on the other hand, of interfering with private enterprise, by its doing, or attempting to do, too much. Mr. Wilson applied himself vigorously to all these difficulties; he exercised the whole of his personal influence, and the whole of that which was given to him by his situation, in dissipating the fanciful obstacles which were alleged to be latent in the unknown tendencies of the Oriental mind; while he certainly elaborated—and he believed that he originally suggested—the peculiar form of State guarantee upon the faith of which so many millions of English capital have been sent to develop the industry of India.

Besides discharging the duties of his office, Mr. Wilson represented the Government of the day on several Committees connected with his peculiar topics, and especially on one which fully investigated the Sugar question. Of the latter, indeed, he became so fully master that some people fancied he must have been in the trade; so complete was the familiarity which he displayed with "brown muscovado," "white clayed," and all other technical terms which are generally inscrutably puzzling to Parliamentary statesmen. On a Parliamentary Committee Mr. Wilson appeared to great advantage. Though sufficiently confident of the truth of his own opinions, he had essentially a fair mind; he always had the greatest confidence that if the facts were probed the correctness of what he believed would be established, and, *therefore*, he was always ready to probe the facts to the bottom. He was likewise a great master of the Socratic art of inquiry; he was able to frame a series of consecutive questions which gradually brought an unwilling or a hostile witness to conclusions at which he by no means wished to arrive. His examination-in-chief, too, was as

good as his cross-examination, and the animated interest which he evinced in the subject relieved the dreariness which a rehearsed extraction of premeditated answers commonly involves. The examination of Lord Overstone before the Committee of 1848 on Commercial Distress, that of Mr. Weguelin before the Committee on the Bank Acts in 1857, and several of the examinations before the Committee on Life Insurance, of which he was the Chairman, may be consulted as models in their respective kinds. And it should be stated that no man could be less overbearing in examination or cross-examination; much was often extracted from a witness which he did not wish to state, but it was always extracted fairly, quietly, and by seeming inevitable sequence.

Mr. Wilson continued at the Board of Control till the resignation of Lord John Russell's Cabinet in the spring of 1852. He took part in the opposition of the Liberal party to Lord Derby's Government, and was very deeply interested in the final settlement of the Free-trade question which was effected by the accession of the Protectionist party to office. After a very severe contest he was re-elected for Westbury in July, 1852, and on the formation of the Aberdeen Government he accepted the office of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, which he continued to hold for five years, until the dissolution of Lord Palmerston's administration in the spring of 1857, and upon his efficiency in which his remarkable reputation as an official administrator was mainly based.

The Financial Secretaryship of the Treasury is by no means one of the most conspicuous offices in the Government, and but few persons who have not observed political life closely are at all aware either of its difficulty or of its importance. The office is, indeed, a curious example of the half-grotesque way in which the abstract theory of our historical Constitution contrasts with its practical working.

In the theory of the Constitution—a theory which may still be found in popular compendiums—there is an officer called the Lord High Treasurer, who is to advise the Crown and be responsible to the country for all public moneys. In practice, there is no such functionary: by law his office is "in commission". Certain Lords Commissioners are supposed to form a Board at which financial subjects are discussed, and which is responsible for their due administration. In practice, there is no such discussion and no such responsibility. The functions of the Junior Lords of the Treasury, though not entirely nominal, are but slight. The practical administration of our expenditure is vested in the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Financial Secretary of the Treasury. And of these three the constitutional rule is, that the First Lord of the Treasury is only officially responsible for decisions in detail when he chooses to interfere in those decisions. Accordingly, when a First Lord, as was the case with Sir R. Peel, takes a great interest in financial questions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer does the usual work of the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of the Treasury has in comparison nothing to do. But when, as was the case in the Governments of Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister takes no special interest in finance, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is very fully employed in the transaction of his own proper business, and an enormous mass of work, some of it of extreme importance, falls to the Secretary of the Treasury. Of late years, the growth of the miscellaneous civil expenditure of the country has greatly augmented that work, great as it was before. In general, it may be said that the whole of the financial detail of our national expenditure is more or less controlled by the Secretary of the Treasury; that much of it is very closely controlled by him; and that he has

vast powers of practical discretion, if only he be a man of ability, industry and courage.

For such an office as this Mr. Wilson had very peculiar qualifications. He was perfectly sure to be right in a plain case; and by far the larger part of the ordinary business of the Government, as of individuals, consists of plain cases. A man who is thoroughly sure to decide effectually and correctly the entire mass of easy, obvious cases, is a safer master of practical life than one eminently skilled in difficult cases, but deficient in the more rudimentary qualification. Nor is the power of certainly deciding plain cases rightly, by any means very common, especially among very intellectual men. A certain taint of subtlety, a certain tendency to be wise above the case in hand, mars the practical efficiency of many men whose conversation and whose powers would induce us to expect that they would be very efficient. Mr. Wilson had not a particle of these defects. He struck off each case with a certain sledge-hammer efficiency, and every plain case at least with infallible accuracy.

It might seemed overstrained eulogy—a eulogy which he would not have wished—to claim for Mr. Wilson an equally infallible power of deciding complicated cases. As to such cases there will always be a doubt. Plain matters speak for themselves: they do not require a dissertation to elucidate them: every man of business, as soon as he hears the right decision of them, knows that it is the right decision. But with more refined matters it is not so; as to points involving an abstract theory, like that of the currency, there will and must be differences of judgment to the end of time. We would not, therefore, whatever may be our own opinion, claim for Mr. Wilson as infallible a power of deciding difficult questions as he certainly possessed of deciding plain questions. But we do claim for him even in such matters the greatest secondary excellence, if indeed, a secondary excellence it be.

Mr. Wilson was perfectly certain to be *intelligible on the most difficult case.* Whether he did right or did wrong, must, as we have said, be from the nature of the subject-matter very arguable. But *what* he did and *why* he did it, was never in doubt for a moment. The archives of the Treasury contain countless minutes from his pen, many of them written with what most men would call rapidity, just while the matter was waiting for decision, and on all sorts of subjects, many of them very complicated ones—yet it may be doubted whether any one of those minutes contains a single sentence not thoroughly and conspicuously clear. The same excellence which has been shown in countless articles in the *Economist* appears in his business-like documents. Wherever his leading articles were written and under whatever circumstances—and some of the most elaborate of them were written under rather strange circumstances (for he could catch up a pen and begin to write on the most involved topic, at any time, in any place, and as a casual observer would think, without any premeditation)—but whatever and however these articles might be written, it may be safely asserted that they do not contain a sentence which a man of business need read twice over, or which he would not find easily and certainly intelligible. At the Treasury it was the same. However complicated and involved the matter to be decided might be—however much it might be loaded with detail or perplexed by previous controversy—Mr. Wilson never failed to make immediately clear the exact opinion he formed upon it, the exact grounds upon which he formed it, and the exact course of action which he thought should be adopted upon it. Many persons well acquainted with practical life will be disposed to doubt whether extreme accuracy of decision is not almost a secondary merit as compared with a perfect intelligibility. In many cases it may be better to have a decision which every

one can understand, though with some percentage of error, than an elaborately accurate decision of which the grounds and reasons are not easily grasped, and a plan of action which, from its refined complexity, is an inevitable mystery to the greater number of practical persons. But, putting aside this abstract discussion, we say without fear of contradiction or of doubt, that Mr. Wilson added to his almost infallible power of deciding plain cases, an infallible certainty of being entirely intelligible in complicated cases. Men of business will be able to imagine the administrative capacity certain to be produced by the union of extreme excellence in both qualities.

One subsidiary faculty that Mr. Wilson possessed, which was very useful to him in the multifarious business of the Treasury, was an extraordinary memory. On his own subjects and upon transactions in which he had taken a decisive part, he seemed to recollect anything and everything. He was able to answer questions as to business transacted at the Treasury after the lapse of months and even of years without referring to the papers, and with a perfect certainty of substantial accuracy. He would say, without the slightest effort and without the slightest idea that he was doing anything extraordinary: "Such and such a person came to me at the Treasury, and said so and so, and this is what I said to him". And it is quite possible that he might remember the precise sums of money which were the subject of conversation. A more useful memory for the purpose of life was perhaps never possessed by any one. In the case of great literary memories, such as that of Lord Macaulay and of others, the fortunate possessor has a continued source of pleasurable and constantly recurring recollections; he has a full mind constantly occupied with its own contents, recurring to its long-loved passages from its favourite authors constantly and habitually. But Mr.

Wilson never recurred to the transactions in which he had been engaged except when he was asked about them; he lived as little in the past perhaps as is possible for an intellectual person; but the moment the spring was touched by a question or by some external necessity, all the details of the past transaction started into his memory completely, vividly, and perfectly. He had thus the advantage of always remembering his business, and also the advantage of never being burdened by it. Very few persons can ever have had in equal measure the two merits of a fresh judgment and a full mind.

Mr. Wilson's memory was likewise assisted by a very even judgment. It was easier to him to remember what he had done, because, if he had to do the same thing again, he would be sure to do it in precisely the same way. He was not an intolerant person, but the qualities he tolerated least easily were flightiness and inconsistency of purpose. He had furnished his mind, so to say, with fixed principles, and he hated the notion of a mind which was unfurnished.

All these mental qualities taken together go far to make up the complete idea of a perfect administrator of miscellaneous financial business, such as that of the English Treasury now is. And Mr. Wilson had the physical qualities also. An iron constitution which feared no labour, and was very rarely incapacitated even for an hour by any illness, enabled him to accomplish with ease and unconsciously an amount of work which few men would not have shrunk from. In the country, where his habits were necessarily more obvious, he habitually spent the whole day from eleven till eight, with some slight interval for a short ride in the middle of the day, over his Treasury bag; and as such was his notion of holiday, it may be easily conceived that in London, when he had still more to do in a morning, and had to spend almost every evening in the House of Commons, his work was

greater than an ordinary constitution could have borne. And it was work of a rather peculiar kind. Some men of routine habits spend many hours over their work, but do not labour very intensely at one time; other men of more excitable natures work impulsively, and clear off everything they do by eager efforts in a short time. But Mr. Wilson in some sense did both. Although his hours of labour were so very protracted, yet if a casual observer happened to enter his library at any moment, he would find him with his blind down to exclude all objects of external interest, his brow working eagerly, his eye fixed intently on the figures before him, and, very likely, his rapid pen passing fluently over the paper. He had all the labour of the chronic worker, and all the labour of the impulsive worker too. And those admitted to his intimacy used to wonder that he was never tired. He came out of his library in an evening more ready for vigorous conversation—more alive to all subjects of daily interest—more quick to gain new information—more ready to expound complicated topics, than others who had only passed an easy day of idleness or ordinary exertion.

By the aid of this varied combination of powers, Mr Wilson was able to grapple with the miscellaneous financial business of the country with very unusual efficiency. Most men would have found the office work of the Secretary of the Treasury quite enough, but he was always ready rather to take away labour and responsibilities from other departments than to throw off any upon them. Nor was his efficiency confined to the labours of his office. The Financial Secretary of the Treasury has a large part of the financial business of the House of Commons under his control, and is responsible for its accurate arrangement. The passing a measure through the House of Commons is a matter of detail; and in the case of the financial measures of the Government, a large part of this—the dullest part, and the

most unenvied—falls to the Secretary of the Treasury. He is expected to be the right hand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in all the most wearisome part of the financial business of the House of Commons; and we have the best authority for stating that, under two Chancellors of the Exchequer very different from one another in many respects, Mr. Wilson performed this part of his duties with singular efficiency, zeal, and judgment.

The Financial Secretary of the Treasury is likewise expected to answer all questions asked in the House as to the civil estimates—a most miscellaneous collection of figures, as any one may satisfy himself by glancing at them. Mr. Wilson's astonishing memory and great power of lucid exposition enabled him to fulfil this part of his duty with very remarkable efficiency. He gave the dates and the figures without any note, and his exposition was uniformly simple, emphatic, and intelligible, even on the most complicated subjects. The great rule, he used to say, was to answer exactly the exact question; if you attempted an elaborate exposition, collateral issues were necessarily raised, a debate ensued, and the time of the House was lost.

Mr. Wilson's mercantile knowledge and mercantile sympathies were found to be of much use in the consolidation of the Customs in 1853, and he took great interest in settling a scheme for the payment of the duties in cheques instead of bank-notes, by which the circulation has been largely economised and traders greatly benefited. During the autumn of 1857, his long study of the currency question, and his first-hand conversancy with the business of the City, were valuable aids to the Administration of the day in the anxious responsibilities and rapidly shifting scenes of an extreme commercial crisis. It would be impossible to notice the number of measures in which he took part as Secretary of the Treasury, and equally impossible to trace his precise share in them.

That office ensures to its holder substantial power, but can rarely give him legislative fame.

On two occasions during his tenure of office at the Treasury, Mr. Wilson was offered a different post. In the autumn of 1856 he was offered the Chairmanship of Inland Revenue, a permanent office of considerable value then vacant, which he declined because he did not consider the income necessary, and because (what some people would think odd) it did not afford sufficient occupation. It was a "good pillow," he said, "but he did not wish to lie down". The other office offered him was the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade in 1855, which would have been a step to him in official rank, but which would have entailed a new election, and he did not feel quite secure that the electors of Westbury would again return him. He did not, however, by any means wish for the change, as the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade, though nominally superior, is in real power far inferior to the Secretaryship of the Treasury.

In the general election of 1857, Mr. Wilson was returned for Devonport, for which place he continued to sit till his departure for India. He went out of office on the dissolution of Lord Palmerston's Administration in the spring of 1858, and took an active part in the Liberal opposition to Lord Derby's Government, though it may be remarked that he carefully abstained from using the opportunities afforded him by his long experience at the Treasury, of harassing his less experienced successors in financial office by needless and petty difficulties.

On the return of the Liberal party to power, Mr. Wilson was asked to resume his post at the Treasury, but he declined, as, after five years of laborious service, he wished to have an office of which the details were less absorbing. He accepted, however, the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade[1] —an office which is not in itself attractive, but which gives

[1] He was at the same time made a Privy-Councillor.

its possessor a sort of claim to be President of the Board at the next vacancy. The office of President is frequently accompanied by a seat in the Cabinet, and Mr. Wilson's reputation on all subjects connected with trade was so firmly established that in his case it would have been practically impossible to pass him over, even if it had been wished. He had, however, secured so firm a position in official circles by his real efficiency, that the dispensers of patronage were, as he believed, likely to give him whatever he desired as soon as the exigencies of party enabled them to do so.

He had not been long in office before he had good reason for thinking that he would be offered by the Government the office of Financial Member of the Council of India under very peculiar circumstances. There had never before been such an officer. One member of Council had since 1833 been always sent out from England, but he had always been a lawyer, and his functions were those of a jurist and a regulative administrator, not those of a financier. The mutiny of the Sepoys in 1857 had, however, left behind it a deficit with which the financiers of India did not *seem* to be able to cope, and which a cumbrous financial system did not give them the best means of vanquishing. There was a general impression that some one with an English training and English habits of business would have a better chance of overcoming the most pressing difficulty of India than any one on the spot. And there was an equally general impression that if any one were to be sent from England to India with such an object, Mr. Wilson was the right person. He united high financial reputation, considerable knowledge of India acquired at the Board of Control, tried habits of business, long experience at the English Treasury, to the sagacious readiness in dealing with new situations which self-made men commonly have, but which is commonly wanting in others.

On personal grounds Mr. Wilson was disinclined to accept the office. He was on the threshold of the Cabinet here; he was entitled by his long tenure of office at the Treasury to a pension which would merge in the salary of Indian Councillor; the emoluments of the latter office were not necessary to him; his life was very heavily insured for the benefit of his family; though he had never during his tenure of office at the Treasury been connected directly or indirectly with any kind of commercial undertaking (the *Economist* alone excepted), some investments which he made in land and securities, entirely beyond the range of politics, had been very fortunate; since the year 1844 everything of a pecuniary kind in which he had been concerned had not only prospered, but remarkably prospered; he felt himself sufficiently rich to pursue the career of prosperous usefulness and satisfied ambition that seemed to be before him here. There was no consideration of private interest which could induce him to undertake anxious and dangerous duties in India; he even ran some pecuniary risk in leaving this country, as it was possible that in the vicissitudes of newspaper property the *Economist* might again need the attention of its proprietor and founder. On public grounds, however, he believed that it was his duty to accept the office; he took a keen interest in Indian finance; believed that the difficulties of it might be conquered, and thought that in even *attempting* to conquer them he would be doing the greatest and most lasting public service that it was in *his* power to accomplish.

He accordingly accepted the office of Financial Member of the Council of India, and proceeded to make somewhat melancholy arrangements for leaving this country. He broke up his establishment here, bade farewell to his constituents at Devonport and to the inhabitants of his native place, attended some influential public meetings in towns deeply interested in the commerce of India, and on 20th October, 1859, left England, as it proved, for ever.

Of Mr. Wilson's policy in India it would not be proper to give more than a very brief sketch here. That policy is still fresh in the memory of the public; it has been very frequently explained and discussed in the *Economist;* it is still being tried; and, though he was fully persuaded of the expediency of his measures, he would not have wished for too warm a eulogy of them while they are as yet untested by the event. In almost the last letter which the present writer received from him, there was a sort of reprimand for permitting this journal to draw too great an attention to his plans, and to ascribe the merit of them too exclusively to him, and too little to the Government of which he was a member.

On his arrival in India he found that the Governor-General was on a tour in the Upper Provinces of India, and before doing any business of importance at Calcutta he travelled thither. This journey he thought very advantageous, because it gave him a great insight into the nature of the country, and enabled him to consult the most experienced revenue officers of many large districts on their respective resources, and on the safest mode of making those resources available to the public. He was much struck with the capabilities of the country, and wrote to England in almost so many words "that it was a fine country to *tax*". On the other hand, however, he was well aware of the difficulty of his task. The only two possible modes of taxation are direct and indirect, and in the case of India there is a difficulty in adopting either. If we select indirect taxation and impose duties on consumable commodities, the natives of India meet us by declining to consume. Their wants are few, and they will forego most of them if a tax can be evaded thereby. On the other hand, if we adopt in India a direct tax on property or income, there is great difficulty in finding out what each man's property or income is. In

England we trust each person to tell us the amount of his income, but even here the results are not wholly satisfactory; and it would be absurd to fancy that we can place as much reliance upon the veracity of Orientals as upon that of Englishmen.

These difficulties, however, Mr. Wilson was prepared to meet. On 18th February, 1860, he proposed his Budget to the Legislative Council at Calcutta, and the reception given to it by all classes was remarkably favourable. He announced, indeed, a scheme of heavy taxation, but the Indian public had been living for a considerable time under a sentence of indefinite taxation, and they were glad to know the worst. Anything distinct was better than vague suspense, and, as usual, Mr. Wilson contrived to make his meaning *very* distinct. His bearing also exercised a great influence over the Anglo-Indian public. In England he had been remarkable among official men for his constant animation and thorough naturalness of manner; in his office he was as much himself as at a dinner-table or in the House of Commons; he had no tinge of supercilious politeness or artificial blandness. In any new scene of action—especially in such a scene as British India—these qualities were sure to tell beneficially. Plain directness and emphatic simplicity were the external qualities most likely to be useful at Calcutta, and these were Mr. Wilson's most remarkable qualities.

The principal feature of Mr. Wilson's Budget was the Income Tax, which he avowedly framed after the English fashion. It is true that but little reliance can, perhaps, be placed on the statements of Orientals as to their wealth. It is very possible that the complicated machinery of forms and notices which is in use here may not be applicable in India. All this Mr. Wilson well knew. But he thought that our Indian subjects should have an opportunity of stating their

income before they were taxed upon it. If they should state it untruly, or should decline to state it, it might be necessary to tax them arbitrarily. But he did not think it would be decent—that it would be civilised—to begin with an arbitrary assessment. By the Income Tax Act which he framed, it is enacted that other modes may be substituted if in any instance the English mode of assessment should prove inapplicable. In other words, if our Oriental fellow-subjects will not tell us the truth when they are asked, we must tax them as best we can, and they cannot justly complain of unfairness and inequality. *We* would have been mathematically just, if *they* had given us the means.

The reception of Mr. Wilson's Budget was universally favourable until the publication of the minute of Sir C. Trevelyan, which, as was inevitable, produced a serious reaction. Heavy taxation can never be very pleasant, and in the Presidency of Madras Sir Charles gave the sanction of the Government—of the highest authority the people saw—to the hope that they would not be taxed. The prompt recall of Sir Charles, however, did much to convince the natives of the firm determination of the English Government, and Mr. Wilson hoped that the ordeal of criticism through which his measures had to pass would ultimately be favourable to them. It certainly secured them from the accusation of being prepared in haste, but it purchased this benefit at the loss to the public of much precious time, and to Mr. Wilson of precious health. Of the substance of this minute it is sufficient to say that its fundamental theory that additional taxation of any sort was unnecessary in India, has scarcely been believed by any one except its author. Almost every one has deemed it too satisfactory to be true.

On another point Mr. Wilson's Budget had been criticised in England, though not in India. It has been considered to be a protective Budget. The mistake has arisen

from not attending to what that Budget is. The changes made by Mr. Wilson in the import duties were two. "The first was a reduction from twenty to ten per cent. upon a long list of articles, including haberdashery, millinery, and hosiery, all part of the cotton trade; the second was an increase in the duty upon cotton yarn from five to ten per cent., thus creating a uniform tariff of ten per cent." [1] Of these two, it is plain the reduction from twenty per cent. to ten was not a change that would operate as a protection to Indian industry; and the increase of the duty on yarn has a contrary tendency. Yarn is an earlier, cloth a later, stage of manufacture, and in Mr. Wilson's own words, "it is a low duty on yarn and a high duty on cloth that encourages native weaving". For the effect of the general system of high Customs duties in India Mr. Wilson is not responsible, but his predecessors. What *he* did has no protective tendency.

If the Income Tax should, as may be fairly hoped, become a permanent part of the financial system of India, it will serve for a considerable period to keep Mr. Wilson's name alive there. So efficient an expedient must always attract the notice of the public, and must in some degree preserve the remembrance of the Minister by whom it was proposed. Mr. Wilson, however, undertook two other measures of very great importance. One of these has been frequently described as the introduction into India of the English system of public accounts. But it would be more truly described as the introduction of a rational system of public accounts. There are three natural steps in national finance, which are certainly clearly marked in our English system, but which have a necessary existence independent of that recognition. These three are—first, the estimate of future expenditure; secondly, what we call the Budget, that

[1] *Economist* of 8th Sept., 1860, p. 977.

is, the official calculation of the income by which the coming expenditure is to be defrayed; thirdly, the audit, which shows what the expenditure has been and how it has been met. The system of finance which Mr. Wilson found in India neglected these fundamental distinctions. There were no satisfactory estimates of future expenditure, and no satisfactory calculation of future income. In consequence, the calculations of the official departments have been wrong by millions sterling, and English statesmen have felt great difficulty not only in saying how the deficit was to be removed, but likewise in ascertaining what the amount of the deficit was. At the time of his death Mr. Wilson was eagerly occupied in endeavouring to introduce a better system.[1]

Mr. Wilson will likewise be remembered as the first Minister who endeavoured to introduce into India a Government paper currency. On 3rd March, 1860, he introduced into the Legislative Council an elaborate plan for this purpose, which, with a slight modification by Sir C. Wood—curious in the theory of the currency, but practically not very important—will speedily, it is probable, be the fundamental currency law—the "Peel's Act" of British India.

The exact mode in which Mr. Wilson regarded these great objects, will perhaps be better explained by two extracts from his latest letters than by any other means. On 4th July, he wrote to a friend:—

"Firmness and justice are the only policy for India: no vacillation, or you are gone. They like to be governed; and respect an iron hand, if it be but equal and just. I have, I think, more confidence than ever that the taxes will be established and collected, and without disturbance. But the task is still an enormous one. I must retrench yet at least three and a half millions, and get the same sum from my new taxes to make

[1] His measures were adopted and are still in use to the great advantage of the finance system of India. (Ed.)

both ends meet. I am putting the screw on very strongly, but rather by an improved policy in army and police than in reductions of salaries and establishments, which cannot be made. I have set myself *five* great points of policy to introduce and carry out.

"1. To extend a system of sound taxation to the great trading classes, who hitherto have been exempted, though chiefly benefited by our enormously increased civil expenditure.

"2. To establish a paper currency.

"3. To reform and remodel our financial system by a plan of annual budgets and estimates, with a Pay Department to check issues, and keep them within the authorised limits,—and an effective audit.

"4. A great police system of semi-military organisation, but usually of purely civil application, which, dear though it be, will be cheaper by half a million than our present wretched and expensive system,—and by which we shall be able to reduce our native army to at least one-third;—and by which alone we can utilise the natives as an arm of defence without the danger of congregating idle organised masses.

"5. Public works and roads, with a view to increased production of cotton, flax, wool, and European raw materials.

"The four first I have made great progress in: the latter must follow. But you will call it 'a large order'. However, you have no idea of the increased capacity of the mind for undertaking a special service of this kind when removed to a new scene of action, and when one throws off all the cares of engagements less or more trivial by which one is surrounded in ordinary life, and throws one's whole soul into such a special service, and particularly when one feels assured of having the power to carry it out. I cannot tell you with what ease one determines the largest and gravest question here compared with in England; and I am certain that the more one can exercise real power, there is by far the greater tendency to moderation, care, and prudence."

In a second letter, dated 19th July, he wrote to the same friend from Barrackpore:—

"The Indian Exchequer is a huge machine. The English Treasury is nothing to it for complexity, diversity, and remoteness of the points of action. Our great enemies are time and distance; and with all our frontier territories there is scarcely a day passes that we have not an account of some row or inroad. It is a most unwieldy Empire to be governed on the principle of forcing civilisation at every point of it. One day it is the frontier of Scinde and a quarrel with our native chiefs, which

our Resident must check; another it is an intrigue between Heraut and Cabul, with a report of Russian forces in the background; the next there is a raid upon our Punjab frontiers to be chastised; then come some accounts of coolness, or misunderstanding, or unreasonable demands from our ally in Nepaul; then follow some inroads from the savage tribes which inhabit the mountains to the rear of Assam and up the Burrampootra; then we have reported brawls in Burmah and Pegu, and disputes among the hill tribes whose relations to the British and the Burmah Governments are ill defined; then we have Central India, with our loyal chiefs Scindiah and Holkar, independent princes with most turbulent populations, which could not be kept in order a day without the presence of British troops and of the Governor-General's Agent. Besides all these, we have among ourselves a thousand questions of internal administration, rendered more difficult by the ill-defined relations between the Supreme and the Subordinate Governments—the latter always striving to encroach the former to hold its own. Hence, questions do not come before us simply on their merits, but often as involving these doubtful rights. Then we have Courts of Justice to reform, as well as all other institutions of a domestic kind not to reform alone, but to extend to new territories. Then we have a deficit of £7,000,000, and had a Government teaching the people that all could be done without new taxes. But unfortunately all, except the taxes, are a present certainty—*they* are a future contingency. What will they yield? I have no precise knowledge. I think from three to four millions a year when in full bloom: this financial year not more than a million.

"I have now got a Military Finance Commission in full swing; a Civil Finance Commission also going: I am reorganising the Finance Pay, and Accountant-General's Department, in order to get all the advantage of the English system of estimates, Pay Office, and Audit:—and this with as little disturbance of existing plans as possible. The latter is a point I have especially aimed at. On the whole, and almost without an exception, I have willing allies in all the existing Offices. No attempt that I see is anywhere made to thwart or impede.

"You can well understand, then, how full my hands are, if to all these you add the new currency arrangements; you will not then wonder that my health has rendered it necessary to come down here for a day or two to get some fresh air."

It will be observed that in the last extract Mr. Wilson alludes to his impaired health. For some time after his

arrival in India he seemed scarcely to feel the climate. He certainly did not feel it as much as might have been anticipated. He worked extremely hard; scarcely wrote a private letter, but devoted the whole of his great energies to the business around him. His letters for a considerable time abound with such expressions as "Notwithstanding all my hard work, my health is excellent". From the commencement of the rainy season at Calcutta, however, he ceased to be equally well, his state began to arouse the apprehensions of experienced observers, and he was warned that he should retire for a short time to a better climate. He would not, however, do so until his financial measures had advanced sufficiently far for him to leave them. His position was a very peculiar one. In general, if one administrator leaves his post, another is found to fill it up. But Mr. Wilson was a unique man at Calcutta. He was sent there because he had certain special qualifications which no one there possessed; and, accordingly, he had no one to rely on in his peculiar functions save himself. His presence on the spot was likewise very important. The administration of a department can be frequently transacted by letter, but the organisation of new departments and new schemes requires the unremitting attention of the organiser—the impulse of his energy. The interest, too, which Mr. Wilson took in public business was exceptionally great, and no one who knew him well would suppose that *he* would leave Calcutta while necessary work, or what he deemed so, was to be done there.

Nor was labour the sole trial to which his constitution was exposed. The success of measures so extensive as his, must ever be a matter of anxious doubt until the event decides; and in his case there were some momentary considerations to aggravate that anxiety. There was no experience of such taxation as he had proposed, and the effect of it must therefore be difficult to foresee. Moreover, for a

brief period, a famine seemed to be imminent in Upper India, which must have disturbed the whole operation of his financial schemes. In his debilitated state of health this last source of anxiety seemed much to weigh upon him.

About the middle of July he went for a week to Barrackpore, near Calcutta. The change was, however, too slight, and, as might be expected, he returned to Calcutta without any material benefit. From that time the disease gradually augmented, and on the evening of 2nd August, he went to bed never to rise from it again. For many days he continued to be very ill, and his family experienced the usual alternations of hope and fear. He was quite aware of his critical state, and made all necessary arrangements with his habitual deliberation and calmness.

Lord Canning saw him on the 9th for the last time, and was much struck with the change which illness had made in him. He believed that he saw death in his face, and was deeply impressed with the vivid interest which, even in the last stage of weakness, he took in public affairs, with his keen desire for the success of his plans, and with the little merit which he was disposed to claim for his own share in them.

It was hoped that he would be strong enough to bear removal, and it was intended to delay the mail steamer for a few hours to take him to sea—the usual remedy at Calcutta for diseases of the climate. But when the time came there was no chance that his strength would be adequate to the effort. During the whole of the 11th he sank rapidly, and at half-past six in the evening he breathed his last.

The mourning at Calcutta was more universal than had ever been remembered. He had not been long in India, but while he had been there he filled a conspicuous and great part; he had done so much, that there were necessarily doubts in the minds of some as to the expediency of part of

it. No such doubts, however, were thought of now. "That he should have come out to die here!"—"That he should have left a great English career *for this!*"—were the phrases in every one's mouth. The funeral was the largest ever known at Calcutta. It was attended by almost the entire population, from the Governor-General downwards, and not a single voice, on any ground whatever, dissented from the general grief.

Very little now remains to be said. A few scattered details, some of them perhaps trivial, must complete this sketch.

Mr. Wilson's face was striking, though not handsome. His features were irregular, but had a peculiar look of mind and energy, while a strongly marked brow and very large eyebrows gave to all who saw him an unfailing impression of massive power and firm determination.

Mr. Wilson's moral character in its general features resembled his intellectual. He was not a man of elaborate scruples and difficult doubts, and he did not much like those who were. His conscientiousness was of a plain, but very practical kind; he had a single-minded rectitude which went straight to the pith of a moral difficulty — which showed him what he ought to do. On such subjects he was somewhat intolerant of speculative reasoning. "The common-sense is so and so," he used to say, and he did not wish to be plagued with anything else. In one respect his manner did not uniformly give a true impression of him. He always succeeded in conveying his meaning, in stating what he wished to have done and why he wished it; he never failed to convince any one of his inexhaustible vigour and his substantial ability; but he sometimes did fail in giving a true expression to his latent generosity and real kindliness. He shrank almost nervously from the display of feeling, and sometimes was thought by

casual observers to feel nothing, when in reality he was much more sensitive than they were. Another peculiarity which few persons would have attributed to him aided this mistake. It may seem strange in a practised Secretary of the Treasury, but he used to say that through life he had suffered far more from shyness than from anything else. Only very close observers could have discovered this, for his manner was habitually impressive and unfaltering. But common acquaintances, sometimes even persons who saw him on business, erroneously imputed to unthinking curtness, that which was due in truth to nervous hesitation.

With his subordinates in office he was, however, very cordial. He discussed matters of business with them, listened carefully to their suggestions or objections, and very frequently was guided by their recommendations. He had no paltry desire to monopolise the whole credit of what might be done. He probably worked harder than any Secretary of the Treasury before or since; but so far from depressing those below him, he encouraged their exertions, co-operated with them, and was ever ready to bear hearty testimony to the tried merit of efficient public servants. He was also quite willing to forget the temporary misunderstandings which are so apt to occur among earnest men who take different views of public affairs. He was eminently tolerant. Though he had almost always a strong conviction of his own, he never felt the least wish to silence discussion. Believing that his own opinions were true, he was only the more confident that the more the subject was discussed, the more true they would be found to be. Few men ever transacted so much important business with so little of the pettiness of personal feeling.

In the foregoing sketch Mr. Wilson has of necessity been regarded almost exclusively as a public man, but his private life has many remarkable features, if it were proper to en-

large on them. His enjoyment of simple pleasures, of society, of scenery, of his home, was very vivid. No one who saw him in his unemployed moments would have believed that he was one of the busiest public men of his time. He never looked worn or jaded, and always contributed more than his share of geniality and vivacity to the scene around him. Like Sir Walter Scott, he loved a bright light; and the pleasantest society to him was that of the cheerful and the young.

The universal regret which has been expressed at Mr. Wilson's death is the best tribute to his memory. It has been universally felt that on his special subjects and for his peculiar usefulness he was "a finished man," and in these respects he has left few such behind him. The qualities which he had the opportunity of displaying were those of an administrator and a financier. But some of those who knew him best, believed that he only wanted an adequate opportunity to show that he had also many of the higher qualities of a statesman; and it was the feeling that he would perhaps have such an opportunity which reconciled them to his departure for India. As will have been evident from this narrative, he was placed in many changing circumstances, and in the gradual ascent of life was tried by many increasing difficulties. But at every step his mind grew with the occasion. We at least believe that he had a great sagacity and a great equanimity, which might have been fitly exercised on the very greatest affairs. But it was not so to be.

The intelligence of Mr. Wilson's death was formally communicated by the Indian to the Home Government in the following despatch:—

"To the Right Honourable Sir Charles Wood, Bart., G.C.B., Secretary of State for India.

"Sir,—The painful task is imposed upon us of announcing to Her

Majesty's Government the death of our colleague, the Right Honourable James Wilson.

"2. This lamentable event took place on the evening of Saturday, the 11th, after an illness of a few days.

"3. We enclose a copy of the notification by which we yesterday communicated the mournful intelligence to the public. The funeral took place at the time mentioned in the notification; and the great respect in which our lamented colleague was held was evinced by a very large attendance of the general community, in addition to the public officers, civil and military.

"4. We are unable adequately to express our sense of the great loss which the public interests have sustained in Mr. Wilson's death. We do not doubt, however, that this will be as fully appreciated by Her Majesty's Government, as it is by ourselves, and as we have every reason to believe it will be by the community generally throughout India.

"5. But we should not satisfy our feelings in communicating this sad occurrence to Her Majesty's Government, if we did not state our belief that the fatal disease which has removed Mr. Wilson from amongst us was in a great degree the consequence of his laborious application to the duties of his high position, and of his conscientious determination not to cease from the prosecution of the important measures of which he had charge, until their success was ensured. Actuated by a self-denying devotion to the objects for which he came out to this country, Mr. Wilson continued to labour indefatigably long after the general state of his health had become such as to cause anxiety to the physician who attended him, and it was within a few days only after the Income Tax had become law, and when, at the earnest request of his medical adviser, he was preparing to remove from Calcutta for the remainder of the rainy season, that he was seized with the illness that has carried him off.

"6. It is our sincere conviction that this eminent public servant sacrificed his life in the discharge of his duty. We have, etc.,

"CANNING.
"H. B. E. FRERE.
"C. BEADON.

"FORT WILLIAM, 13*th August*."

THE CHANCES FOR A LONG CONSERVATIVE RÉGIME IN ENGLAND.[1]

The change of last February (1874) was one of the most sudden ever seen even in the shifting world of English politics. The catastrophe of the Gladstone Cabinet took every one by surprise. People hardly seemed to believe that it could be true, or that it could be permanent. The Conservatives could hardly help asking, "Are we really in, and really going to stay in?" or the Liberals murmuring, "Surely we are not out, and going to stay out". On many familiar faces there was a sudden disappointment, and on others an equally sudden hope. Even now, though months have passed, the world is not sure what the change means; and therefore it may not be amiss to examine it carefully. There are some questions more important than who are to be our rulers, but there are not many such questions.

Of course, what we want to know is, which party is likely for a certain time, say the next twenty years or so, to have the preponderance of power. There will always be many "ins-and-outs" in English politics. But experience shows that though these minor perturbations are determined by momentary events, there are secular causes which, in the long run, fix the predominance. For forty years before 1832 the Tories were in power with only one exception; during the forty years since, the Liberals have been in power with brief exceptions. These instances of continued power were

[1] This fragment was written in 1874.—E. Bagehot.

too long and too remarkable to be produced by mere luck. And the cause is not difficult to find. Each generation naturally prefers one party or the other. Events and circumstances stamp a similar character on most of the members of it. The terrors of the first French Revolution stamped on a whole generation of Englishmen a bigoted Conservatism. The same sanguine spirit which in France produced the Revolution of 1830, generated in a whole generation of Englishmen a spirit of hope and a desire for innovation. The result was a long Tory Government in the first case, and a long Liberal Government in the second. Minor changes were caused by passing accidents, but permanence in power coincided with the settled feeling of the age. If we would cast the horoscope of the future we must see what influences are now fixed in the ascendant and on which side they work.

In happy States, the Conservative party must rule upon the whole a much longer time than their adversaries. In well-framed polities, innovation—great innovation that is—can only be occasional. If you are always altering your house, it is a sign either that you have a bad house, or that you have an excessively restless disposition—there is something wrong somewhere. Just so a nation which is for ever having great eras, changing fundamental laws, founding new constitutions, is either very unfortunate in its old polity, or very fickle in its disposition—perhaps it may be both. In any case there is no hope for steady happiness in such a State. Happiness, as far as it is affected by politics, needs a good, or at any rate a suitable, inherited polity, and a tenacious resolution not to change that polity without reason shown. The most successful nations have erred on the other side, and have evinced a stupid inability to admit even the best reasons. Not to cite the Romans and other common book examples, let any one try at the present mo-

ment to persuade the Americans to alter any of the clauses in the "Washington Constitution," and then he will comprehend how hard it is to induce a practical people to change its fundamental political code; how keenly it values a "deed of settlement" of that kind; how much it feels that it gains by it; how unwilling it is to venture out into the unknown. Nations eminent in practical politics have always possessed a singular constancy to old institutions, and have inherited institutions more or less deserving that constancy.

As I write for Englishmen, I need not draw out a formal proof that England is a country successful in politics. This is a fact which we are all of us ready to accept and assume. Nor need I prove that we have inherited a Constitution of some value. Almost all thinking Englishmen prize much of it highly; and unthinking Englishmen are apt to believe it the one good and adequate Constitution in the world—the sufficient cure, if they would only take it, for the evils of all other nations. And we have been constant to it for centuries; some parts of it may be traced back to the woods of Germany; others, though much newer, are still several hundred years old; the whole outward framework of it is ancient; the inner part, though gradually modified, has never been changed upon system. Few such things have ever lasted so long; few such have ever undergone so much needful change with so little solution of continuity. But there are prerequisites of our political success, and for that success itself we must pay a price, and a part of that price—to Moderate Liberals, like myself, a serious part—is a preponderance—perhaps a great preponderance on an average, and taking a long time—of Conservative rule over Liberal.

I say that this price is serious, because I am sure of its magnitude. The best Government for free States, both past history and present experience seem to me to prove, is a

Government, as the French would say, of the Left Centre. The centre in their language is the representative of the great neutral mass, which is not violently in favour either of one side in politics or of the other; which inclines now more in one direction, and now more in the other; which is often nominally divided between Left and Right, between the movement and the non-movement parties, and which then forms a certain "common element," of which both parties partake, and the members of which are much more akin and much more like to the members of it in the other party, than they are to the extreme partisans in their own. The Left Centre is that side of this steadying and balancing element which inclines to progress, which is alive to new ideas, which wants to introduce them not nearly so violently as the Extreme Left wishes, nor so soon as it wishes, but which tries to adjust them to existing things and older ideas, and which wants to bring them down to the real world as soon as the real world will bear them. In short, the Left Centre wants to introduce tested innovations when the average man begins to comprehend them, and not before; and to introduce them in the shape in which he comprehends them, and not in any other shape. If the predominant power is in the hands of men like this, they secure the State against the worst evils of Conservatism and the worst evils of innovation. They will not allow evils to stand so long unredressed, that at last it is of little use redressing them; they will not permit new men rashly, and on a sudden, to apply new ideas which match nothing in the present world, which join on to nothing, and which mar everything. The Left Centre will neither drive so slow as to miss the train, or so fast as to meet with an accident.

But though it is most desirable that the Left Centre should gain lasting power, it is also most improbable that they can, as a body, obtain power upon no "cry," and yet

they have no cry. There is no scream in them. They have very sound words, very steady arguments, very judicious observations; but the multitude do not care for sound words, or steady arguments, or judicious observations; it wants something exciting, something stimulating, something with a note of exclamation. And the Left Centre are just the last people in the world to supply this, for their pleasure is to be calm, and their aim is to be accurate. You might as reasonably ask a Quaker for oaths as a member of the Left Centre or a Moderate Liberal—for it is all the same—for stimulating programmes and exciting plans.

"You must in politics," a distinguished statesman once said to me, "have not only a scheme before you, but a power behind you." And this is where the Left Centre and the Moderate Liberals fail. The great energies of the earth are not theirs. There are two principal powers in politics. One is the great wish of all ordinary decent people, poor and rich, to lead the life to which they have been used, and to think the thoughts to which they have been accustomed. In real life this elementary feeling does not, indeed, display itself simply; on the contrary, it hides itself in a prettier shape, it calls itself loyalty; it cries that it wants to preserve the Queen, or the Czar, or the Union. Nothing, indeed, is more absurd than this Conservative sentiment when it does not know what to cry out. Conservative Frenchmen are in this position at this moment; they are puzzled between the Septennate, the Republic, and the Empire; they would cry for any one of these, if they were sure of its efficacy; indeed they would cry for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, if they were sure that the Governor and Company would do the work. But however we may smile at the feeling, its strength makes it of cardinal importance; in times of revolution it has volcanic power. The shopkeeper, ordinarily so quiet, will fight for his till, the

merchant for his counting-house, the peasant proprietor for his patch of soil, with an almost rabid fury, such as no mere soldier will show for anything. In quiet times it is the most enormous of "potential energies"; a statesman who is supported by it may reasonably feel that he has a force in reserve, which, if he elicit it, will certainly produce a mighty effect, and perhaps annihilate his enemies and maintain his rule.

On the other hand, there is in States a mighty innovating —it would almost be clearer to say, revolutionary—impulse. It is not given to "one good custom to corrupt the world". Nature has an effectual machinery to prevent it. We imagine a fictitious entity called a nation; we habitually think and speak of it as if it always remained the same; but in truth, after a few years, it is no longer the same. The men who compose it are different. The generations change; the son is not like his father; the grandson is still less like his grandfather. They do not feel the same feelings, or think the same thoughts, or lead the same life. If a man of fifty will take any house which he has always known, and which has twice changed owners in course of nature, he will get a notion of the intensity of the change. "Nothing about the place," he will be almost inclined to say, "is the same now as it was when he was a boy,"—it is not so much a question of this or that particular thing, but the look is different, the spirit different, the *tout ensemble* is different. In States it is the same. You can no more expect different generations to have exactly the same political opinions, to obey exactly the same laws, to love exactly the same institutions, than you can expect them to wear identical clothes, own identical furniture, or have identical manners. In both cases there will no doubt be much which is common to the two generations, but the similarity will be enhanced by contrast; the identity will be assured by differences.

Unhappily, laws and institutions are not changed so easily as furniture and manners. The things of the individual can be changed by the individual, but the things of the community—at least in free States—can only be changed by the community; and communities are heavy to move. The necessary agents are many, and slow to gain. In consequence, all these States are liable to acute spasms of innovating energy. The force which ought to have acted daily and hourly has long been effectually resisted every day and every hour; at last it breaks forth with pent-up power; it frightens every one, and for the minute seems as if it might destroy anything. This catastrophic innovating rage is, for the instant of its action, the predominant force in politics, and a statesman who gains its support need look for no other and care for no other.

But the misfortune of the Left Centre—or Moderate Liberals—is that they cannot rely on gaining the support of either of these great powers. They are in sympathy neither with the intense Conservative force, nor with the intense innovating. They are "betwixt and between," and make distinctions which no one heeds; they live in a debatable land, which each party attacks and neither defends; they have the sympathy of neither party, but the enmity of both. In, perhaps, his best novel, Sir Walter Scott has sketched the fate of such men in troubled times. Henry Morton, the hero of *Old Mortality*, is a moderate Presbyterian, but the Conservative Government—the Episcopalian Government—want to kill him because he is a Presbyterian; and the Cameronians—the extreme Presbyterians, the working rebels—want to kill him because he is moderate. And so his aims are frustrated, his hopes annihilated, and he has to leave his country for a long exile. In quiet times, moderate politicians have certainly not to fear either death or exile. But they have not only to fear,

but to expect, that Conservatives like Mr. Disraeli—the head of one power—will sneer at them as "stray philosophers"; that Liberals like Mr. Bright—the head of the other power—will deny that they are "robust politicians". They will have the consolations of philosophy, and they have a confident perception of truth attained; but they must do without conspicuous power and the "worship of those with whom you sit at meat"; they must endure the tedium of inaction, and bear the constant sense of irritating helplessness. Though they are the best of rulers for the world, they are the last persons to be likely to rule.

The fate of the Left Centre—the Moderate Liberals—is the harder, because that of the Right Centre—the Moderate Conservatives—who differ from them so little, is so very much better. The world will accept from them that which it would never dream of accepting from their rivals. If the Moderate Conservatives choose to propose moderate Liberal measures, they are certain to pass them. The Liberals must support them on principle, and even the Extreme Conservatives rarely try to oppose them, and still more rarely do so effectually. The most Extreme Conservative is usually aware that some change must be carried sometimes, and he is disposed to think that perhaps the changes that his own friends incline to may be those changes. At any rate, he does not see where he can get so little change. If he leave the alliance of the Moderate Conservative, he must either stand alone, which is impotence, or ally himself with Liberals, which is hateful. For one who wants to change nothing, to combine with those who want to change more, against those who wish to change less, is ridiculous. Accordingly the Moderate Conservatives have almost always a game at their disposal if they are wise enough to perceive it. All that they concede, the attacking force will accept, and whatever they choose to concede, the rest of the defend-

ing force must allow. In two ways the Conservatives in happy States are likely to have a preponderance of power: first, because that happiness is an indication that in the main the existing institutions are suitable, and that very much organic change is not wanted; and secondly, because Conservatives, if they only knew it, have the greatest advantage in making the changes which have to be made.

This constant tendency to Conservative rule may be counteracted by many accidents for short periods, and by two lasting causes for long ones. The Liberal party may long be maintained in power, either when the country requires a kind of administration which is at variance with Conservative ideas, or an incessant course of legislation which is equally so. Recent English history has excellent examples of both. For many years after the accession of the House of Hanover the Liberal party was in power without a break. They came in with George the First, and reigned without a break till the accession of George the Third—that is, for forty-six years. The cause is obvious. During the greater part of that time the Tory party was incapable not only of effectual competition, but even of any approach to it. The strongest and most characteristic members were opposed to the reigning dynasty; in country parsonages and manor-houses Jacobitism was a creed slowly dying, though not dead.

If no more could be said, and if the subject stopped here, we should have proved that the prospects of Liberals, and especially of Moderate Liberals, were at all times most unhappy. But fortunately the causes we have described may be for long periods effectually counteracted in two ways. First, the Liberals may be persistently maintained in power because the nation persistently exacts a species of administration which is inconsistent with the Conservative ideas in that age, and from which Conservatives in

that age are excluded. This was the case in England during two whole reigns. From the accession of George the First to the death of George the Second the Whig party was continuously in office. And it was so because the new dynasty had been placed on the throne by the exertions of the Whigs. The Extreme Tories, at the accession of George the First, were Jacobites; the Moderate Tories were lukewarm. The former would have opposed the Hanoverian dynasty; the latter would never have striven for it. For many years the sentiment of the Tory party—the sentiment of country parsonages and rural manor-houses—was in favour of their exiled Sovereign; they were Legitimists, as we should now say, in feeling, if not in practice. The Whig party were in office because there was a pretender to the Crown, and because the reigning dynasty could only be maintained on the throne by the persons who had placed it there; all others would have been unsafe supporters at a time of real danger. The hold of the Whigs on office was the stronger because the dynasty which they supported embodied a principle, and the dynasty which they resisted denied that principle. In essence, the rule of the House of Hanover implied that the House of Commons should be the dominant power in the Constitution; the return of the Stuarts would have implied that it should be reduced to a subordinate power. The judgment and sense of the nation preferred to be governed by Parliament, though much of its fancy and feeling still remained on the other side. The Whigs, who founded the system of Parliamentary Government, were long the only party who could be trusted to work it, because they alone were at heart in favour of it. To entrust its working to avowed Tories, would have been to place it at the mercy, at the best, of latent critics; at the worst, of latent enemies. The Liberal party were at the beginning of the period the sole

possible administrators, because they were the only reliable friends of the system to be administered; and they continued to administer it till the end of the period, though the Jacobitism of the Tories was steadily waning, because no evident proof of that waning had been publicly given, and because the long possession of power had created as usual a practised skill in using it, and a popular belief that in fact it must be theirs, and that of right it ought to be theirs.

It may at first sound absurd to ask whether there is at the present time any obstacle likely to disable the Conservatives from creating or maintaining a suitable administration; but it is not really absurd at all. It is true that there is no change of dynasty from which they can suffer, but there is a change of ideas which may be as perplexing. They have, as we have seen, been out of office upon the whole and with trivial exceptions for more than forty years. Those years have been busy with changes—far more busy than the previous hundred. Our economic policy has been revolutionised, so has our colonial, so has our Irish. Our foreign policy has become altogether different. Our domestic policy is much changed on secular matters; in religion the way of regarding the Church and the way of regarding dissent are even more changed. These are the consequences of long Liberal rule, and the Conservatives must be content to accept them, and to act as if they were their own; to act as if the new policies were policies such as they would have shaped, and the new laws such as they would have chosen. It will not be enough that they do not attempt to repeal the new laws or to reverse the new maxims; they must apply those maxims to new cases and new circumstances; they must supplement those laws by incessant subordinate auxiliary legislation. If they wish to inherit the fruits of the last forty years, they must work in the spirit of the last forty years. And they

will find this very difficult. In their hearts they will not like it; the best of their supporters will grumble at it. They must be prepared to hear from old friends, "We might just as well have the Liberals in, if this is to be their policy"; and from old members of Parliament, "I wish the Whigs were back again with all my heart, for then one could vote against their measures, and now one has to vote for them". If the Conservatives are to remain in power, they will be far from enjoying an exquisite life of unmixed happiness; they will have to renounce very much for which they have contended, to take to their hearts much against which they have contended.

Two accidents enhance the difficulty. There has not been for many years—I am not sure that there has ever been—so great a change in our administrators. A party which has been forty years out of office necessarily inherits many leaders who have been little in office, and who have passed their lives in opposition; who may have an inborn genius for official business, but who can have had little training; who are like old generals who have seen no war. But it rarely happens that a great party has only such leaders. Almost every party has some leaders who have come over from the opposite party, and who, when that opposite party has been long in office, will bring with them official experience. Thus when the Whigs came into office in 1832, they had been for more than a generation out of office. Lord Grey and Lord Althorp—in name their two leaders—were almost wholly without official experience; but then there came in with them the Canningites, as they were called, who had much official experience. Lord Palmerston—the most vigorous of them—had almost no experience of anything else. He had been all but continuously in office for the previous twenty-five years—for the whole of his public life. And the records of that time show that this infusion of trained apti-

tude was a great help to the new Liberal Government. Lord Brougham especially dwells with emphasis on the vigour and promptitude which Lord Palmerston showed in Cabinet Councils, as compared with the "indecision and inefficiency" of the "unofficial Whigs". But the present Cabinet have no such aid. The Canningites were men of another world; there is no group of politicians now in the least like them, or comparable to them. All the present Conservatives are untrained as administrators, though their task peculiarly requires skilled and trained administrators, for they have to adapt themselves to a situation which they did not make, and to administer a policy which is not their own.

If the Conservatives were now led by a Premier with a pre-eminent faculty for administration, these obstacles might be surmounted without extreme difficulty. Much greater miracles have often been worked by an active and competent dominant mind. But Mr. Disraeli, so far from being a pre-eminent man of business, scarcely pretends to be a man of business at all. He had no training in it. His youth was passed in light literature. Till (in 1852) he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons, he had never filled any office whatever; probably had never transacted any business whatever. Nor has he done much since. When in office, he has, till now, been always leader of the House of Commons without a majority. His whole mind has been occupied in clever strategy; he has been trying to make five men do the work of six; he has been devising clever policies which will divide his enemies, and little epigrams which will sting. Such work exactly suited the nature of his mind;—the movements of no leader were ever so delicate; the sarcasms of no speaker were ever more fine and well-placed. But in all other matters he was simply a tolerated deficiency. If you pointed out the monstrous inconsistency of his serious assertions, his friends said, "It is

Dizzy, you know; that is his way". If you showed some astounding inaccuracy, they said, "Yes, Dizzy goes like that". If you asked as to any of the wonderful stories of his official negligence, they said, "Ah, Dizzy does not care for these things". But the world has gone on, and we have come to a time when his party may be ruined because Dizzy does not (probably can't) do these things.

The best description of the duties of a Prime Minister is that given by Sir Robert Peel. "You must presume that he reads every important despatch from every foreign court. He cannot consult with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and exercise the influence which he ought to have with respect to the conduct of foreign affairs, unless he be master of everything of real importance passing in that department. It is the same with respect to other departments: India for instance; how can the Prime Minister be able to judge of the course of policy with regard to India unless he be cognisant of all the current important correspondence? In the case of Ireland and the Home Department it is the same. Then the Prime Minister has the patronage of the Crown to exercise, which you say, and justly say, is of so much importance and of so much value; he has to make inquiries into the qualifications of the persons who are candidates; he has to conduct the whole of the communications with the Sovereign; he has to write, probably with his own hand, the letters in reply to all persons of station who address themselves to him; he has to receive deputations on public business; during the sitting of Parliament he is expected to attend six or seven hours a day, while Parliament is sitting, for four or five days in the week—at least he is blamed if he is absent." It is obvious that these duties cannot be performed at all except by a considerable man of business, and that they can only be tolerably performed by a consummate one. Most of these duties are performed in private, and the

public—if it ever comes to know whether they are well or ill performed—comes to know it only after a long time, and by some casual distant effect. But we do know that up to this time two of the most important are at present very badly performed. The conduct of the business of the House of Commons was last session (1874) so bad that, though it was the easiest year which has been known for years, and though members of Parliament had twice as much time on their hands as has been known for years, yet the most important business Bill of the Session—the Judicature Bill—which was all ready for passing, which might have been passed in a few hours, for which the whole legal profession was waiting, and by the delay of which they are vexed and hampered, was abandoned without an excuse. Again, the supervision of the Premier over the departments has this year (1874) been so ineffectual, that the Bill of the Government which awakened most interest and excited most discussion—the Endowed Schools Bill—was so drawn that the Premier said he could not understand it. He tried to throw the blame on the way in which bills for the Government are now drawn; but on this point the Lord Chancellor replied to him, and said that the bills of the Government were now extremely well drawn, and that he was ashamed of the remark of his colleague. The truth is, that Mr. Disraeli had no real knowledge of the subject, though it is one of such interest; that he had no accurate acquaintance with the Endowed Schools Act which he was going to amend; that, in consequence, he did not know how it was proposed to amend it; and that, as usual, he was but using neat words to cover confused ideas.

It is too late for Mr. Disraeli to change his habits. He was not trained as a man of business, he has never lived as one, and he cannot now become one. He is wholly unable to give to his Cabinet the administrative impulse

and the administrative guidance which their want of experience makes so necessary, and which their peculiar task requires. "An oak," according to the saying, "should not be transplanted at fifty," and a novelist who is near to seventy—who hates detail, and who knows no detail —cannot guide his younger colleagues in a new world of thorny business, much of which is alien to their prejudices, much of which was made by their adversaries, but to which they must shape their ways and adapt their policy. So long as Mr. Disraeli remains at the head of the Conser, vative Government, its career will be one of many stumbles- though its great majority may keep it from falling. It is, indeed, argued that Mr. Disraeli's supremacy is essential to the present Cabinet for another reason. It is said that if it were not for his influence this Cabinet would not try to adapt itself to the world which it inherits from the Liberals, but that more or less it would try to return to the past, and to re-make an unmade world. But as to this I have no authority to say anything, and little inclination. As a general rule, nothing can be less worth attention than rumours as to the divisions in cabinets. Every one knows how they are generated in the smoking-rooms of clubs and of the House of Commons. Of course all Cabinets are divided. Fifteen clever men never agree about anything; but how they are divided it is rarely possible to know, and then only under a pledge of secrecy. The few who know such things are slow to divulge them; and as to this particular rumour, I can only say that, if it be true, it does not make the defects of Mr. Disraeli smaller, but shows that the Government has another great defect besides those which he causes. It does not make him a better man of business that he has to resist a reactionary party; on the contrary, it will make him a worse, for he will have less mind and less energy to devote to business. This division

within the Cabinet will be another cause of stumbles. It will not diminish the effect of the other cause, but heighten it; for the scandal of twenty blunders is much greater than twenty times the scandal of one. Nothing can be more probable than the existence of such a reactionary party in the Cabinet. It is almost inevitable that some of its members should dislike to accept Liberal measures, and, where a link is missing, to complete Liberal measures. But, if they mean to stay in office, they must do so. The country is as firmly attached now to the Liberal laws of the last forty years, as it was a century ago attached to the principles of the Revolution. It will no more permit their curtailment now, than it would permit the deposition of the House of Hanover then. The Conservatives will not be able to maintain themselves in office unless they can find a Cabinet able to transact the business of the country, and willing to accept the principles of the country. The natural inclination to a Conservative Government of such a country as this, in such an age as this, will be suspended at least till then.

Whether that tendency can be longer counteracted depends on our second cause. As we have seen, the instinctive inclination of comfortable Englishmen to a Conservative Government may not only be counteracted, it may be replaced by a steady and intense desire for a Liberal Government, if there is an immense demand for new laws. That demand Conservatives cannot supply if they would, for they cannot be enough in sympathy with the love of novelty to know what is wanted; and they would not supply it if they could, because they think that what is coincides, in its main scheme, with what ought to be. They may be ready to change the detail of many things, and even the spirit of a few things, but they are not ready to change the life of much—the essence of the whole. As we all know, such has been the case for the forty years last past. The

Liberals have had a monopoly of power because they had an incessant supply of new laws, which they were ready to propose, which the Tories were not ready to propose, and which the nation wanted. And now the main question comes, Is this supply exhausted or is it not? Have the Liberals any new great measures which they will pass, which the Conservatives will not pass, which the nation will keep them in power in order to pass?

Such measures must fulfil three conditions: first, they must be such as will interest mankind; secondly, they must be such as to secure the support of men of sense; thirdly, they must be such as the Conservatives will not propose. The second condition is as important as either. Though in form the political constitution of this country approaches much more nearly than it did to a democracy, as yet it makes almost no approach to a democracy in spirit. The influence of education, wealth and rank are still enormous; it is at present of no use to propose taking measures which the mass of people might like, if sensible people see that the people ought not to like them, for they will really have more bad effects than good ones.

In searching for such subjects, I think that we may omit altogether the economic and commercial subjects which have filled so much space in the public mind of late years. There is little more to do in them—at least, little in comparison with the much which has been done;—whether the income-tax shall be repealed or abolished, whether the tea duties shall be remitted or retained, are questions of much fiscal, and perhaps more social, importance. But the Conservative way of dealing with them is not likely to be very different from the Liberal way. The sensible men of both parties would, I believe, be glad to retain the income-tax, though they cannot emphatically say so, because it might not be popular at an election. Sensible men would be glad,

too, I think, though they are not so unanimous about it, to keep a larger yearly surplus than we have been used to keep, and to apply that surplus to redeeming debt. But the sensible men of one party are about as much in favour of these plans as the sensible men of the other. Neither has a monopoly of them, nor, if either had, would they be of use for party purposes. They do not interest the many enough to gain the votes of the many. In the main, what one party would do on these questions the other would do also. There is no *advertising* measure which the Liberals can get hold of, and the Tories cannot.

It may be contended, indeed, that the old conflict which Mr. Cobden was so fond of may be revived—that the new Government may spend more money than the late Government, and a reduction of expenditure may be used as a good cry against them. And we cannot, of course, discuss this till we know what this Government spends, and still more how it spends it. But we do not believe that the cry will again be so efficient as it has been, except there be gross mismanagement or corruption. No doubt, with a certain lower class, such a cry will always be popular. If you address a large meeting of poor people, and tell them that it is reckless waste to spend ten millions on our navy, and that all which is wanted may be obtained much cheaper, of course they will cheer you, and agree with you. Ten millions is too great a sum for their imaginations to carry; they think it would buy up the whole universe. If you told them that it was too much to spend altogether, they would quite agree with you; they cannot imagine so much really being required for anything or everything. But among thinking men, used to figures, the cry for a reduced expenditure rather excites suspicion than wins support. They cannot but see that the expenditure of the country can hardly fail to increase as the population and the wealth of the country increase, and that

as a rule it ought so to increase. When the work of Government augments, the cost of Government must be expected to augment also; if it does not so, either too much was spent before, or enough is not being spent now. In public affairs, as in private, it is quite possible that there should be an excessive economy. The old miser in Pope, who let his tenants die—"he could not build a wall"—has an obvious analogy in every sort of business. A growing community must, in nine cases out of ten, require a growing expenditure. And this country is more likely to require it, because our society is augmenting not only in size but in complexity. Even now it probably contains the finest mass of interweaved relations which have ever existed in the world, and every day adds both to their number and to their involution. Such a nation takes more mind to govern it than a simple nation, and in "meal or in malt" mind must be paid for. Even the data to which that mind is to be applied are increasingly costly, and must be bought at an increasing price. Science is wanted to bring those data together, and on science much more must be spent for many years, than we have been in the habit of spending.

The country is quite willing to spend it and quite able. The Englishman individually is the most expensive animal on the face of the earth; and though he has learnt to babble a cant as to liking a cheap Government—it is a cant merely. I have heard a most experienced person say, "If you want a cheer in the House of Commons, make a speech on general economy; if you want to be beaten in a vote, propose a particular saving". And this happens because in this matter, as in so many others, the practical instinct which guides Englishmen in the detail of life is far wiser than the general maxims which they have acquired, and in which they fancy they believe. When they see the question, as Lord Eldon used to say, "clothed in circumstances,"

they detest the idea of a mean Government, and are quite ready to pay the cost of a dignified one. They are also quite able. There are of course countries in which the first duty of Government is to save every sixpence which can be saved. If at this moment the Government of Marshal MacMahon should spend any important sum which could be avoided, it would deserve the greatest censure. The people of France are so heavily taxed, and the inevitable taxes so much cripple trade, that any additional burden becomes a grave evil. But England is not in that position. No class here is oppressed by our taxes, and many classes could well bear to pay more than they do. The difference in cost between a mean Government and a dignified Government, between a stingy Government and a liberal Government, is one which the English nation is well able to pay, and one which rightly guided it would be eager to pay.[1]

[1] [This essay was never concluded. Mr. Bagehot proposed to discuss in it whether either a new Parliamentary Reform, a great Church Reform, or a great Land Reform would have enough hold on the people to keep the Liberal party in power, solely with a view to carry any one of these measures. But his judgment was clearly unfavcurable to the popularity of any of these with men of sense, and his conclusion evidently was that unless the Conservative party should lose office by their inaptitude for administrative duties, a long reign of Conservatives was to be expected. —Editor of the *Fortnightly Review*.]

This fragment was published by Mr. John Morley after Mr. Bagehot's death in the *Fortnightly Review* for 1st December, 1878.—E. Bagehot.

BOSCASTLE.[1]

WHATEVER doubt there may be as to the truth of Mr. Darwin's speculations on other points, there is no doubt that they are applicable to the coast cliffs of North Cornwall. No doubt every cliff owes its being to natural selection. All the weak rocks have been worn away by ages of conflict with the whole Atlantic, and only the strong rocks are left. They often are worn, too, into shapes resembling the spare and gigantic veterans of many wars; wherever the subtle ocean detected a bit of soft stone, it set to and wore it away, so that the grim masses which stand are all granite—the "bones and sinews" of geology. The peculiarity of the coast, among other beautiful ones, is that it is a mere coast;—the picturesque stops at the cliff line. In the adjacent coast of north and west the high hills of the interior send down many streams, which in the course of ages have hollowed out deep valleys and softened with woody banks the wild and stony fields. But Cornwall is a thin county, has no deep interior to be a source of big streams, and the little ones which trickle forth have to rush over a rock too hard and too bleak for them to wear it into delicate valleys. But the shore line is charming, not only because the waves swell with the force of the full ocean, while the bays are scooped and the rocks scarred by its incessant hand—its

[1] This and the following article have been recovered from the *Spectator*, and are now republished by the kind permission of the proprietors of that newspaper. That on Boscastle appeared in the *Spectator* of 22nd September, 1866.—E. BAGEHOT.

careful hand, I had almost said, so minute and pervading are its touches—but the hard grey rock of the shore also contributes much to make *clean foam*. The softer rocks always mix something of their own alloy with the pure sea, but the grey grit here has no discolouring power; the white line of spray dances from headland to headland as pure and crystal-like as if it had not touched the earth.

But I have no intention of wearying you with a description of scenery. The sea-shore is a pretty thing, but it is not a discovery of my own. The coast is very curious, I do not mean in those ante-Roman remains which your most learned contributor has so well described. I cannot presume to tell you whether in truth in this place, as in so many others, according to the last ideas and perhaps the hardest terms of ethnology, the dolichokephalic race of men attacked and extirpated the brachykephalic, or short-headed, ten thousand years before history began. Anyhow, if the theory is true, it must have been cold work on these cliffs and moors, when you picked up mussels and (if possible) crayfish, and cut skins, if you had any, into clothes with a blunt flint, when fire had just come in as a new and (Conservative thought!) suspicious thing, and tattooing was still the best of the fine arts. The year A.D. 1866 has defects, but it is better certainly than the B.C. 18,660, if the human races were really about then. But, as I said, I cannot deal with such matters; I have only a little to say about the changes of life and civilisation which this coast marks in the last century or two.

We are familiar with the present state of trade, and with the phenomena it creates and the conditions it requires. It shows itself to the eye at once in immense warehouses, cities spreading over miles and miles, and not seeming even to anticipate a boundary, a population daily streaming from the thinly inhabited outskirts, and daily concentrating itself more and more in the already thronged cities. Commerce

gives much to those who have much, and from such as have little it takes that little away. But the prerequisites of our commerce are of recent growth, and our ancestors even lately did not possess them. They are—large and ready capital, rapid and cheap land carriage, the power of making great breakwaters to keep out storms, the power of making large docks to hold many vessels, the ability to protect and the confidence to amass great wealth close to the sea-shore. But a very few generations ago these gifts were wanting. It was useless to bring all merchandise to one port, for when there you could not use it; no railway and no canal distributed bulky articles; they had to be brought by water to the nearest possible market; they might nearly as well have staid where they were grown, if they had to be conveyed a hundred or two hundred miles when here. All our great protective works against the sea, all our great accumulative works at the great ports, are modern in the strictest sense, post-modern, as geologists would say, part of the "drift" of this age.

But though in theory we know these things, yet they come upon us with a sudden completeness when we see the sort of place our ancestors thought a port. Boscastle is as good an example of their idea as can be found. It is a creek shaped like a capital S, with, I should think, the earliest and smallest breakwater on record just about the middle. The sea runs with great violence on all this coast, and no open bay is safe for a moment. But the turn or crook of the Boscastle creek, which I have endeavoured to describe by likening it to the letter S, in a great measure protects it, and even early masons were able to run out on the solid rock some few feet of compact stones, which help to add to the shelter. The whole creek is never nearly as broad as Regent Street, and it gradually runs away to be narrower than the Strand, while at the point of the breakwater there is a real

Temple Bar, which hardly seems wide enough for a ship at all. The whole thing, when you first look down on it, gives you the notion that you are looking at a big port through a diminishing glass, so complete is the whole equipment, and yet so absurdly disproportionate, according to our notions, is the size. The principal harbour of Lilliput probably had just this look. But though its size across is small, the rocks which make its jaws are very formidable, and the sea foams against them in an unpleasant manner. I suppose we ought to think much of the courage with which sailors face such dangers, and of the feelings of their wives and families when they wait the return of their husbands and fathers; but my City associations at once carried me away to the poor underwriter who should insure against loss at such a place. How he would murmur, "Oh! my premium," as he saw the ship tossing up to the great black rock and the ugly breakwater, and seeming likely enough to hit both. I shall not ask at Lloyds' what is the rate for Boscastle rocks, for I remember the grave rebuke I once got from a serious underwriter when I said some other such place was pretty. "Pretty! I should think it was," he answered; "why it is lined with our money!"

But our ancestors had no choice but to use such places. They could not make London and Liverpool; they had not the money; what wealth existed was scattered all over the country; the central money market was not. There was no use in going to the goldsmiths who made Lombard Street to ask for a couple of millions to make docks or breakwaters, even if our science could have then made large specimens of the latter, which it could not. And, as I said before, these large emporia when made would have been quite useless; the auxiliary facilities which alone make such places serviceable did not exist. The neighbourhoods of Bideford and Boscastle had then to trust to Bideford and

Boscastle; they had no access to London or Liverpool; they relied on their local port, and if that failed them had no resource or substitute.

The fringe of petty ports all over our coasts serves to explain the multitudes of old country houses, in proportion to the populations of old times, which are mouldering in out-of-the-way and often very ugly places. The tourist thinks—how did people come to build in such an inaccessible and unpicturesque place? But few of our old gentry cared for what we now call the beauties of nature; they built on their own estates when they could, and if those estates were near some wretched little haven they were much pleased. The sea was the railway of those days; it brought, as it did to Ellangowan in Dirk Hatteracik's time, brandy for the men and "pinners" for the women to the lonest of coast castles. According to popular belief, King Arthur himself thus lived. The famous castle of Tintagel hangs over the edge of a cliff, right over the next little bay to that of Boscastle—a very lone place, where a boat could get out to sea if the pilot knew the place, but where no stranger or pirate could get in with the tiniest craft, under peril of his life. By land, too, the Saxon must have had many a weary mile of bog and moorland to cross before he reached the crag's edge, and had very tough walls to deal with there, for they have not been repaired these thousand years, and at perhaps the most windy point in England some of them are standing still. King Arthur is out of luck just now. The sceptical, prosaic historians disbelieve in him, and the ethnologists despise him. What indeed is the interest of a dubious antiquity of thirteen hundred years, if we really can get to the people who dwelt "near Bedford" side by side in daily life with the long-horned rhinoceros and the woolly-haired mammoth? So between the literati who think him too far off to believe in,

and the literati who consider him too modern to take an interest in, King Arthur is at his nadir. But how singular was his zenith before! Whatever may be the doubt as to the existence of his person, there is no doubt as to the existence of his reputation, and it is the queerest perhaps even in legend. If he was anything, he was a Celt who resisted the Teutonic invaders, and yet years after, when these very Teutons created their own chivalry, they made into a fancied model of it this Celt, who never dreamed of it, who could not have understood an iota of it, who hated and perhaps slew the ancestors of those who made it. There are hundreds of kings whose reality is as uncertain as Arthur's, and some, though not many, whose fame has been as great as his; but there is no king or hero perhaps whose reality, if it were proved, *must* be so inconsistent with his fame.

I did not intend to have gone into this matter, but the "strong" legend of the place was too much for me. I meant only to have said that it was in the ruined small ports and coast granges and castles of Queen Elizabeth's time that our Raleighs, and Drakes, and Frobishers were formed. In the ante-Lancashire period, now forgotten, Devon was a great mercantile county, and adjacent Cornwall shared, though somewhat less, in its power and its celebrity. It was "Devonshire," local enthusiasts have said, "which beat the Spanish Armada." I am not sure of the history; according to my memory, the Armada was beaten by the waves; but Devonshire is right in this—she bred a main part of those who would have resisted the Armada, and who in that age fought the Spaniards whenever, in either hemisphere, propitious fate sent an opportunity.

Mr. Arnold has lately been writing on the influence of the Celtic character on the English. I wish he would consider whether the predominance of Southern England in old

times, say in the Tudor period, had nothing to do with the largely romantic elements in the characters of those times. "North of the Trent" the population was always thin till the manufacturing times, and there must have been a much scantier subjacent race of Celts there than in Devon and the South. It may be accident, but certainly the Tudor Englishman tends to crop up hereabouts. There is Mr. Kingsley, who was born, I believe, at Clovelly, and has drunk into his very nature all the life of this noble coast. There is in his style a vigour, softened, yet unrelaxed, which is like the spirit of these places. If he is not more like a Tudor Englishman than a nineteenth-century Englishman, then words have no meaning, and Mr. Arnold may be able to prove, though I can but suggest, that the source of all this compacted energy, fancy and unsoundness lies in the universal local predominance of the Celtic nature. The datum is certain at least; we can all see that Mr. Kingsley is not like the pure Goth of Lancashire, for there can be little of the Celt there.

I do not feel able to confirm these ethnological speculations by any personal observations of my own upon the Boscastle natives. Their principal feature, to a stranger at least, is a theory they have that their peculiar pronunciation of the English language is the most correct. I asked a native the way to the chemist's, pronouncing *ch*, as is usual, like a *k*. The man looked at me wondering, then I repeated, when he said with pity, "You mean the *tch*emist's". Is this the last soft remnant of a Celtic guttural, or only the outcome of the inbred pragmaticalness of the natural rural mind?

MR. GROTE.[1]

"Mr. Grote, a merchant who reads German," writes Mr. Crabb Robinson, in an early entry of his diary, and this is perhaps the earliest mention in print or in literature of the great historian whom we have this week lost. And though in detail the entry is wrong, though Mr. Grote never was exactly a merchant, yet in an essential point it indicates his characteristic excellence. Mr. Grote was not a mere literary man, and no mere literary man could have written his history. He was essentially a practical man of business, a banker trained in the City, a politician trained in Parliament, and every page in his writings bears witness that he was so. Just as in every sentence of Thucydides there lurks some trace of exercised sagacity fit for the considerate decision of weighty affairs, though by fate excluded from them, so in every page of Grote there is a flavour not exactly of this quality, but yet others only to be learned in the complex practical life of modern times, and equally necessary for it. At the beginning he impressed the shrewd diarist as pre-eminently a man of business, and pre-eminently a man of business he remained to the end.

Since 1842 he devoted himself so exclusively to literature that his powers in action were little known to younger men. Only a few now remember what he was as a banker and what he was as a politician. But for many years he has been Vice-Chancellor of the University of London and Vice-President and President of University College, and those who

[1] This article was published in the *Spectator* of 24th June, 1871.—E. Bagehot.

have seen him in those capacities well know that he had all the faculties of a great administrator and many of the faculties of a great ruler. Almost all the important measures of these bodies wear the almost personal mark of his wide knowledge and strenuous decision, and it was difficult in both to carry much in opposition to them.

The style of the *History of Greece* shows the practical taste of its author in its most marked quality,—its *reality*. As it is twelve thick volumes long, it cannot be called a short book, but there is not a word added for the sake of effect. Every word was written because it was wanted to express the full meaning of the writer, and because the writer would be content with nothing less than his full meaning. Most writers on ancient subjects leave their readers to suppose something, require of them to fill in some links in the chain of reasoning. But Mr. Grote argues everything out. He tries historical questions as if he were a judge expounding them to a jury. He states every probability, weighs each witness, discusses every reason. It never strikes him that his readers may not wish to go through these processes, that they may not have as much interest in the subject as he has himself. He evidently thinks they ought to wish to know it all, even if they do not. They are impanelled to try the issue, and they are bound in conscience not to relax their attention till they have heard all which can be said about it. The conscientious historian will not let them off a single reason or permit them to omit the minutest authority. The whole style says, from the author to the reader, "Now I want to explain this to you, and I know you want to have it explained to you, therefore let us go all through it". How different this is from most historians we all know. Most of them never give their readers credit for a sustained interest in the matter in hand; they think that their style must be ornamental or no one will read

them; that they must hurry on quick or no one will have patience with them. Probably at times Mr. Grote is needlessly full, and certainly on many occasions he argues the same point too often; the case of the "Sophists" is argued in his "Plato" at least a hundred times, still, on the whole a reader wanting to understand Greek history will be refreshed by a writer "who has no style," who at least does not think of his style, who pours all his ideas plainly forth, who assumes his readers to be as really interested in the events as if they were his own money matters.

The views of evidence in Mr. Grote's history are as practical as the style. "Why do I believe events in common life?" he asks. "Because I have the evidence of honest eye-witnesses for them, either given to me at first hand; or communicated through trustworthy channels, and under the same circumstances and no other, will I accept events in history." Tried by this rigid rule, the Argonautic expedition, the Trojan war, the legends of Thebes vanish alike, and vanish wholly. Sir G. Lewis upon Niebuhr is not more contemptuous than Mr. Grote on the constructive critics—on those who try to make bricks without straw—who think they can evolve "certified fact" from "uncertified fiction," who have canons of probability, or, what is more convenient, an internal tact by which they learn which is truth and which is legend. Mr. Grote's questions in all cases are,—who saw this, and how do you know that he saw it? He will listen to nothing else. We need not, indeed we cannot, discuss here whether this is a good theory of evidence or a bad, a complete one or an incomplete, we cite it only as showing the practical bent and bearing of Mr. Grote's mind. He brings historical evidence "out of the clouds"; he reduces it to the same sort of evidence as that upon which a banker discounts a bill, a politician believes a contemporary conversation.

Practical men have always an object in what they do; and strange as it seems to those who "think other thoughts and live in other days," Mr. Grote's object was to refute Mitford. That clever writer is now unread and forgotten, but in his day he was a keen Tory, and discussed the affairs of Athens in the spirit of a Tory. The contest between oligarchy and democracy, between the rule of the many and the rule of the few, was as vigorous in the time of the Peloponnesian war as in that of the first French Revolution, when Mitford lived. Being a Tory, he fell upon the Liberals of Athens as vigorously, as keenly, as unscrupulously as he would have fallen on Mr. Fox and Lord Grey. If there could have been a bill of Pains and Penalties against Cleon, Mr. Mitford would have produced a bill of Pains and Penalties. As he could not do this, he amassed every prejudice and accumulated every innuendo. In Mr. Grote's youth, more than forty years since, this party pamphlet was in orthodox England received history, and he determined to reply to it. The original design of the twelve volumes, which begin at Troy and end with the death of Alexander, was to refute the accusations of Mitford against Greek Liberals, and expose the false panegyrics of Mitford upon Greek aristocrats. There is much else, of course, in Grote's history, much else far more valuable. This was the first thought, the young man's dream of what it was to be.

Mr. Grote was peculiarly likely to write such a reply, for he belonged to a remarkable class of most vigorous Liberals They were called the "Philosophic Radicals" forty years ago, and had a curious, hard, compact, consistent creed. They were in the most anomalous position possible as politicians. They were unpopular Democrats; they liked the people, but the people did not like them or their ideas; they said that the mass of the nation ought to have direct conclusive power, but the mass of the nation said they would not on any ac-

count have such power. To preach that the numerical majority ought to rule to a numerical majority which does not wish to rule is painful. A barbarous demagogue, no doubt, will shout till the people hears. But the "Philosophic Radicals" were not barbarous demagogues, but grave, careful reasoners. They might defend Cleon in theory, but they had no tinge of the Cleon in practice. Some, Mr. Grote even perhaps, would not have borne at all easily the liberties which Cleon would have taken with him. The philosophic Radicals had a lesson to teach the people which the people did not wish to learn, and they were decidedly the last sort of people to make them learn it. It was natural that a man like Mr. Grote, with ample leisure and conscious of great literary power, should turn to a more congenial occupation.

Around the original anti-Mitford thesis Mr. Grote accumulated the most enormous store of miscellaneous knowledge. There was perhaps no subject that he could possibly bring into his theme which he did not bring in, and on which he did not write as fully as it was decent to write. Nor does the trumpet ever give an uncertain sound. Sir George Lewis justly said that Dr. Thirlwall was like Lord Eldon; "he even used his acuteness in order to avoid coming to a decision". But no one would say this of Mr. Grote. Perhaps he discusses a million subjects or more, and has expressed more than a million distinct opinions. No doubt this omnivorous discussion and this universal copiousness have impaired the merits of the *History*. The main subject is buried under the collateral, and only a very careful reader can always bear in mind whence he came or perceive why he is going where he seems to be taken. Nor has Mr. Grote, as a mere narrator, any peculiar charm; he tells his story plainly and fairly, but he does not make you read for the sake of the story. In ancient history, however, mere narrative is almost a secondary element. So many

cardinal facts are omitted, and so many important inferences denied, that a perpetual disquisition must be mixed with the regular narrative, and in disquisition Mr. Grote has been very rarely equalled, and never surpassed. That Macaulay's famous criticism, "too many plums and no suet," is applicable to Grote's history is certain, but Greek history is of necessity almost entirely "plums".

That the political part of Grote's history is much better than most of the other parts every one will admit. Scarcely any one will now think the treatment of the mythology sufficient. "Prehistoric" speculation, as we now call it, might be made to elucidate the opening part of Greek history. But comparative mythology and prehistoric speculation are subjects which have been quite elaborated afresh since Mr. Grote dealt with the earliest Greece. If they had been known in 1846, we should have had an ample dissertation on them; probably many dissertations. There are defects of omission, and there are other (as most people will think) defects of commission. To estimate Grote's great work, the greatest philosophical problems and the deepest religious questions must be discussed; on almost every one of them he has expressly given his opinion, or not obscurely hinted it. But we cannot deal with these great subjects now. Gibbon said he was sustained by the hope that "a hundred years hence I might still continue to be abused". Abuse is not the word for Mr. Grote, but a hundred years hence his writings will still continue to be the ground of controversy and the basis of discussion. The scholarship and the mode of teaching grave history in our time will be judged of hereafter by the *History of Greece* more than by any other work. "Those who go down to posterity," said Mr. Disraeli, both wittily and wisely, "are about as rare as planets," and Mr. Grote will be one of the few in this generation.

THE END.

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